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AUTHOR OF "THE PRINT OF THE NAILS" AND
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TO

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NOT BY SIGHT

I

NOT BY SIGHT

In one of his characteristic parentheses St. Paul pictures the gait and bearing of the pilgrims of eternity, who *walk by faith, not by sight.* Christians of a certain school are wont to emphasise what they term the "walk" of a believer, as distinguished from his "standing." But this *obiter dictum* of the apostle defines the condition of our whole spiritual life. His sentence finds manifold illustration and confirmation. Indeed, when we ponder a little, we perceive that the capacity to walk by faith, full of forward-looking thoughts, to live on the assurance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, is a distinctly human faculty which sets man apart from the beasts. It is true that God's dumb creatures do not live merely by sense and sight. They have strange powers which range far beyond our ken. Consider the birds of the air. What points the

way to a homing pigeon? What marshals the swallows on their trackless flight to winter in African sunshine? We call such amazing faculties instinct, and mask our ignorance behind that word. For science has never fathomed instinct. "It seems a deeper mystery than intellect, and may be more nearly connected with the final secret of life." Man, who has learned to observe and to reason, can guide his steps by what is surer than the blind instinct of birds and beasts. Yet man himself, the observer and reasoner, makes his grandest advance when he reaches out beyond all that his previous knowledge has been able to verify. The dauntless Genoese sailor, who turned his ship's prow towards the sunset and crossed an uncharted ocean, did not steer by sight or by experience. Columbus had collected every scrap of evidence, and had concentrated his mind for years on the mystery of those Atlantic waters. But his voyage was a splendid act of faith. He made a heroic venture, and his venture revealed the new world. From such an example it appears that the contrast often drawn between faith and science, or faith and reason, is illogical and fallacious. Faith can appropriate all the treasures of experience, and can utilise every power of thought: but it launches out beyond them, and

adventures upon the assurance of something which is as yet uncertified. The real antithesis of faith is not reason, but sight.

Faith, moreover, is so far akin to feeling that it always has something of the character of a personal relation. In its highest form, it is our personal confidence in some person, our inward reliance upon the character of another. Consider the relation involved in friendship. From the nature of the case we always walk by faith, so far as our nearest friend is concerned. We never dream of setting detectives to watch his private doings. We refuse indignantly to listen when evil tongues impugn his integrity. Even if he be accused, and appearance condemn him, our heart clings loyally to his goodness; in the teeth of appearances we know that he is true. Faith of this kind lies at the root of friendship. One of Dr. Johnson's maxims recommends us to keep our friendships in repair. Well, we carry out the maxim most effectually by sheer loyalty to our friends. In these days, when we all have to live in glass houses and the world is become one vast whispering gallery, slander penetrates everywhere and hardly any prominent man or woman escapes the poisoned dart. Let us at least be generous enough to trust our friends, sometimes in spite of ugly circumstances and damaging reports. Even

when their conduct seems to us unwise, let us credit them with worthy motives. If we must condemn their judgment, we need not suspect their honour. In this dim, tangled life, where misconstruction is so easy and quarrels are so bitter and separations so sharp, let us resolutely believe the best possible about those whom we love, walking by faith since we cannot walk by sight.

It is only through such faith that we can attain to the noblest things on earth—in marriage, and patriotism, and friendship. Need we wonder that the heights of heaven can be scaled no other way? Concerning Abraham, the father of the faithful, it is written that he believed God, and he was called *God's friend.* Abraham became the father of the faithful, because he anticipated the very quality and virtue of Christian faith. To trust God means to treat Him as a friend. For it seems as though God were throwing Himself upon the loyalty of His children, and asking us whether we dare trust Him in spite of appearances. We have no skill to explain the universe. We cannot unravel its perplexed and sorrowful contradictions. But in spite of them all, we can cling passionately to the All-perfect Father. Faith is a rooted confidence in the Divine nature and character. We believe that the best possible shall prove true at

last, not because it has been proved true at present, but because to doubt it would be like a blasphemy against the Everlasting Love. Dr. John Hunter quotes the familiar lines:

> Whatever record leap to light,
> He never shall be shamed,

and goes on to ask: "Is that confidence too much to fill our hearts with in regard to God and all His ways?" Dare we affirm that His tender mercies are over all His works, in all places of His dominion? When Robert Louis Stevenson declared his own "belief in the kindness of this scheme of things and the goodness of our veiled God," he was confessing that he walked by faith, not by sight.

There are some very devout people who know far too much. They can explain the whole secret and purpose of pain and evil and death in the world. *They prate about the mystery of things as though they were God's spies.* It is far humbler and more Christian to admit that we do not fully discern a reason and method in this long, slow tragedy of human existence. Nevertheless, though all men impeach the love of God, we believe in a perfect Will bringing all things to a perfect end which lies out of our sight. Doubtless God might have ordained it otherwise. He might

have made His own being as clear and certain as the sun in heaven. He might have traced the path of each man's duty so that it was as plain as the highway from town to town. He might have let us see the hills of the heavenly country to be as real as Snowdon or Skiddaw. He might have sent us messages from the departed like the news we get from correspondents in a foreign land. But God has not so willed it. He has placed us in this present world of shadows and confusions. He has taught us fragments of truth, and given us hints of duty, and thrilled us with a deathless hope of the world to come. Yet whenever we carry our dead to the graveyard, we must walk by faith, not by sight. Even the revelation of Jesus Christ seems to challenge us, whether we dare trust God for all that remains unrevealed. In the Gospel it is as though the Eternal Voice said to men: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. I cannot unveil the mystery of being and show you the end of evil and make you understand the secret of sorrow. One thing I can do, and I will do. I will share these things with you and endure them for you. I will enter Myself into everything which My children suffer. I will undergo their curse and misery. I will bear away the sin of the world." It is our faith that Almighty God

has been manifested once for all in the Person of Jesus Christ. There, and there only, He opens the hidden heart of things to our gaze. His revelation is brought home to each soul through intimate personal experiences which cannot be fully expressed in words. Faith involves "a mystery inscrutable even to the man who lives by it—a mystery known indeed, with an intense and vivid certainty to which all common knowledge is no more than mist and twilight, yet in its depth unmeasured and in its fulness inexhaustible." But when once the vision of redeeming Love dawns on a man, he can go on his way, regardless of whatever appears to contradict it. Henceforth he walks by faith, not by sight.

This principle of Christian progress applies alike to the method and to the success of what we try to do in the world. For example, when we walk by faith, we are delivered from the temptation to time-serving and the worship of expediency. Men of faith, as Froude said, are men who do not care to succeed anywhere or in anything if they cannot succeed nobly ; men who have but one fear—the fear of doing the wrong thing and taking the wrong side. And even when we go down into the valley of disappointment and failure, we must still walk by faith. Times come when our fairest plans miscarry, and

our unselfish effort goes for naught, and our sacrifice for the sake of others seems no better than wasted folly. Yet just in these heart-breaking experiences God is appealing to our loyalty and bidding us trust Him in the dark. We cannot see what He means by dealing with us thus. He is asking us to walk by faith. He is whispering: "Behold, I have beset thee behind and before, and laid Mine hand upon thee. Such knowledge is too wonderful for thee. Have patience, and I will tell thee all."

No other principle than this conditions the progress of the Christian society. In every generation the Church must walk by the same rule and mind the same thing. Amid her labours and her losses she is justified by faith, not by sight. We grow disheartened because such poor results appear to follow our collective Christian endeavours. At home, the fire dies down into embers after a revival. Abroad, great regions in the mission field remain almost barren. So few of the seeds we sow spring up, and fewer still bear visible fruit. So much of the Church's toil seems thrown away. Yet it is the test of our Christian loyalty that we labour by faith, and not by outward results or apparent success. We shall begin to succeed, when we have faith enough to let the thought of success sink to its proper

level. Those who judge by appearances may conclude, as the children of this world have concluded so often, that Christ's cause is decadent and doomed to perish. Whereas we who are His know that Christ is reigning and conquering. His Kingdom which cometh not with observation is even now being set up over the wrecks and ruins of earthly tyrannies. His love is ruling at the spring and centre of all things, according to the working of the mighty power whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. We see not yet all things put under Him. But we inherit His blessing on them that have not seen and yet have believed. And we can rest "in sure and certain hope that since God is God, perfect goodness in the end must have its perfect victory."

MORE GOLDEN THAN GOLD

II

MORE GOLDEN THAN GOLD

PRIVATE property seems ingrained in the fibre of our civilization. We can hardly imagine a social order under which it did not exist. Some day such an order may become possible; but hitherto, so far as we know, communism has been in practice only among primitive tribes. The power which comes to a man from his possessions can, of course, be abused, like any other kind of power. Yet even this abuse, though it shows that the power of wealth must be restrained, does not prove that all possessions ought to be nationalized. Private property was sanctioned by the Hebrew foundation laws which said "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not covet;" and the New Testament ratifies both those commandments. The Gospel puts a check upon avarice and profusion by insisting on the moral claims of others; but the Gospel never tells Lazarus that he may rob Dives, either by

fraud or by force. Whatever else Jesus Christ was, He was assuredly no leveller, abolishing all personal possessions. In the words of a modern archbishop, Christ did not say, "Behold, I squeeze all things flat"; He said, "Behold, I make all things new."

Our Lord has made all things new by coming as He came, by being what He was, by doing what He did. The Incarnation changed the axis of the world. Everything is different since the first Christmas and Good Friday and Easter Day. Perhaps the most revolutionary feature of Christ's advent was this, that for our sakes He became poor. He took upon Him the form of a servant. His earthly life and surroundings form a great enduring object-lesson concerning wealth and poverty. Jesus Christ was born in a stable as a poor woman's child, with only a mother's love to welcome Him, in order that He might not be marked out by rank or fortune among the sons of men. He came in such guise to prove that the poorest workhouse baby is just as dear to God as any little prince born in the purple of a palace. And His after-life at Nazareth carried on the lesson of its beginning. In that obscure Syrian town Christ grew up under a cottage-roof. He was schooled into all the patient shifts and drudgeries of the poor. A narrow home has no privacy, so

He went out on to the hillsides to find it. He chose His friends from among common people. Probably in all His life He never had £20 to call His own. In the end He borrowed a winding-sheet and a grave. Those hands which the nails pierced had grown hardened with daily toil for daily bread. Those garments which the soldiers parted among them were a workman's clothes. That thorn-crowned forehead was wet with the sweat of labour for many a year before His sweat was as it were great drops of blood.

To Christians, no details in the Gospels appear more affecting than those which reveal the literal hardness of our Lord's earthly lot—how He hungered and made fruitless search for food, how He thirsted and begged a cup of cold water from a stranger, how the Son of Man had not where to lay His head. Here is the idea which has arrested and enthralled men like Francis of Assisi—the thought of the unsearchable poverty of Christ. And yet these facts of want and abasement impress us more, perhaps, than they weighed upon our Lord Himself. For He always treated money as a kind of accident, of no real account. As He moved among men it never crossed His mind that the circumstance of their wealth or their penury made the smallest difference in God's sight. The riches which Christ renounced and

the poverty which He embraced are not to be reckoned in terms of "corruptible things, as silver and gold." Compared with the passion of His Divine love, nothing else on earth seriously matters.

Moreover it was not merely by example, but by precept as well, that Christ revealed the dignity and blessedness of a low estate. We get a glimpse into His own personal feeling in regard to wealth when we find Him face to face with the rich young ruler whom He loved. Into that man's ear He whispered a counsel of perfection: "One thing thou lackest: go and sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." That command was not laid, so far as we know, upon any other disciple. But the fact that Christ imposed it upon one of the very few persons for whom He is said to have entertained a peculiar and individual affection surely betrays the light in which He Himself regarded riches. It is as though the Lord said: "Come and follow Me, and fare as I am faring. Hast thou great possessions? I, too, was rich; but for man's sake I became poor." We cannot read the Gospel without perceiving that Christ recognized a certain value and virtue in poverty. In these days we pity it as the worst evil of life, we lay schemes to abolish it. But He lifted up His eyes upon His

disciples and said serenely, "Blessed are ye poor." That benediction may be qualified—indeed, Christ qualified it Himself. Yet the fact remains that He associated spiritual treasure with those who are disinherited in this world. He saw how meekness and simplicity and detachment make their abode as a rule in humble dwellings. When He exhorted us to live on the lily and sparrow footing, He understood that a comfortable pension often creates the most deadening of all environments for the soul.

And when we turn to examine our Lord's positive teaching, we are startled to find how often and how urgently He speaks about money. To begin with, He lays immense emphasis on one point. He declares again and again that the things which a man possesses serve as a subtle test and touchstone of character. We are entrusted with property because it forms part of our moral and spiritual discipline. It is a stewardship for which we must give strict and solemn account. To be found faithful in the unrighteous mammon, in our dealing with material wealth, is one great guarantee of our fitness for the true riches. A man's real self comes out in the way in which he thinks about his money, and talks about his money, and handles his money. It is astonishing how many of Christ's

sayings form a sermon on the text, "Take heed and keep yourselves from covetousness." Again and again He warns men against the dangers of wealth. Riches, He tells us, are a terrible responsibility, a cleaving entanglement and temptation. Two of His most searching parables, which shake the heart with fear, describe the doom of men who had great possessions. The vision of judgment shows us Lazarus comforted and Dives tormented—so it appears—as the outcome and sequel of their respective misery and luxury upon earth. And the prosperous farmer who plans to pull down his barns and build greater is ruined by success; he grows sleek and secularized in his prosperity, and wakes up in the unseen world a naked, bankrupt soul. When our Lord singles out one among all the principalities and powers of evil as a Christian's deadliest foe, He tells us peremptorily, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon"—not Astarte, nor Moloch, but Mammon, *the least erected spirit that fell.*

Let us frankly confess that among Christ's hard sayings none are so difficult to understand and carry out as certain parts of His teaching in regard to money. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, which seems to forbid litigation and war and taking oaths, leaves just as little room, apparently, for the pursuit of gain. Here we

cannot even attempt to indicate how that Sermon may be harmonized with the complicated problems of human intercourse. But at least it is plain that human nature, as we know it in our daily relationships, still needs the warning which our Lord uttered so sternly and so often against the love of wealth. Money, in itself, may become a blessing, and the instrument of things better still. It can bestow leisure, and freedom from anxiety, and opportunities to travel and to choose friends, and power to accomplish large practical good. But we discover too often that money creates a shrivelled nature, a corroded conscience, a self-centred soul. It is true, indeed, that the deadly sin of covetousness can rankle in those who are poor. A cobbler may be niggardly and envious. A wealthy capitalist may be generous and simple-hearted, by the grace of God. Yet there comes a special danger lest, if riches increase, we set our hearts upon them. As you watch your old friends prospering, do their characters generally seem to escape deterioration? Men's besetting sins are said to vary with their age. The characteristic temptation of youth is sensuality; in middle life it is ambition; in advancing years it is avarice. Elderly men have had more time to accumulate money; but it is melancholy to observe how many people become close-fisted as they grow old.

Have we not known such persons in the Christian Church—fervent and prayerful and kindly, but unable, it seems, to part with money? It may be said that our Lord was preaching to Jews, to whom covetousness has always been a national vice. But are modern Englishmen and Scotsmen and Americans free from the greed of gain? How many business men go on slaving to grow richer, for the mere pleasure of possessing what they will never spend? Gambling, again, depends for its chief interest on its appeal to the love of money; and our two great public gambling hells, the race-course and the Stock Exchange, are more crowded than ever. The gravest political peril which threatens modern nations arises not from Socialism, but from organized rings of financiers. Within living memory there has been an enormous multiplication of wealth in England, and of the enjoyments which wealth procures. The world is far more with us than it was in Wordsworth's time. For multitudes of people material comforts and luxuries form the supreme object of care. But Christ and all the Christian saints warn us that "a man who is dependent on the luxuries of this life is a corrupt man—spiritually, politically, financially corrupt."

As a witness to the ethical urgency of our Lord's words about riches and poverty, we may

quote the testimony of one who claimed no place among orthodox believers. Professor William James, however, spoke with all the more authority because he realized what Mammon means in America. "When one sees the way in which wealth-getting enters as an ideal into the very bone and marrow of our generation, one wonders whether a revival of the belief that poverty is a worthy religious vocation may not be the spiritual reform which our time stands most in need of. Among us English-speaking peoples especially do the praises of poverty need once more to be boldly sung. We have grown literally afraid to be poor. The desire to gain wealth and the fear to lose it are our chief breeders of cowardice and propagators of corruption. We despise any one who elects to be poor in order to simplify and save his inner life. If he does not join in the general scramble and pant with the money-making street, we deem him spiritless and lacking in ambition. We have lost the power even of imagining what the ancient idealisation of poverty could have meant. . . . The prevalent fear of poverty among the educated classes is the worst moral disease from which our civilization suffers."

Every generation has a characteristic blind spot on its retina. What we most need is to

recover this aspect of Christ's example and teaching which we neglect and ignore because it seems so incongruous with the spirit of the age. When modern Christians regain their Lord's point of view with regard to money and begin to look at it with His eyes, a wonderful change will come about. We shall not then find it difficult to reverence a saint in shabby clothes, or to give him a chief place in our synagogue, even though he may work six days a week at a carpenter's bench, like his Master. The Church at present concentrates much of its energies upon raising funds. We are tempted to measure ecclesiastical success in terms of hard cash. When we speak of influential Christians and leading religious laymen, we mean the persons who give the largest subscriptions. But the real potency of the Church depends upon something utterly different. Christ's cause has never yet stood still for sheer lack of funds. If our Lord came among us now and found His disciples so busy with schemes for raking shekels into His treasury, so eager to mend the world by making everybody more comfortable and prosperous, He would say, "Ye are careful and cumbered about many things: but one thing is needful—and that one thing is not comfort, it is not money." Saint Teresa declared that more good is done by a

minute of reciprocal, contemplative communion of love with God than by the founding of fifty hospitals or of fifty churches. Like many other mystics, Teresa was a terribly practical person, who founded hospitals and convents herself. But she understood relative spiritual values, and she realized that one saint is far more potent for the highest good than many millionaires. "By his habitual communion the saint adds to the everlasting treasure of all who are united in the Body of Christ. And the least of his words or actions may be of more vital effect in the world than the life's labour of any of the herd of benevolent people who are busied about much serving."

Even worldly men cannot help paying secret homage to the beauty of unworldliness. There is an irresistible charm about Lacordaire's ideal of "a great soul in a small house." If we try to recall the individuals who during the last half-century have exerted the most profound and spontaneous personal influence, we think of such men as Newman and Mazzini and Gordon, who were alike in the supreme grace of detachment: they simply did not care about money. That is a true instinct which makes us all feel proud and thankful, whenever we hear that some eminent and saintly Christian has been content

to die poor. The right attitude of soul with regard to riches is higher than renunciation. When two young people fall in love they become gloriously indifferent about money; and they ought to be, if they are properly in love. Even so the love of Christ can constrain us to think as He thinks and to feel as He feels about the world's golden prizes—not grudgingly, but with the glad detachment of those whose heart and treasure are otherwhere.

OUR HUMILIATION

III

OUR HUMILIATION

THE English Prayer Book contains nothing more noble, more adequate to its intention, than the order for the Burial of the Dead. And that service comes to a climax in the awful, heart-piercing words of committal, which end with St. Paul's prophecy: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself." There is just one word which jars on the spiritual ear. The Apostle wrote, not "our vile body," but "the body of our humiliation." He had no tinge of stoical contempt for flesh and blood. Yet he perceived the sensuous side of man to be the symbol and instrument of our low estate, whether living or dying. Through the body we lie exposed to the passions and sufferings and indignities of existence. And these physical conditions and necessities become of themselves

"our humiliation." To St. Paul's mind this stood apart from the question of personal sinfulness. There may be, indeed, some original flaw in Nature which corresponds to an original fall of man. But the Apostle was no Manichæan. He never placed the essence of evil in man's material constitution. He recognized sin as resident in the will. And so he wrote, not "the body of our guilt," but "the body of our humiliation."

Now this way of looking at life is something distinctly Christian, unlike the Hebrew beatitude of well-being, still more unlike the Greek worship of physical beauty. And it is implied in the Gospel rather than expressed. The complex constitution of man is one of those mysterious facts which Christianity takes for granted, without pausing fully to explain. The New Testament is occupied, not with the philosophy of human nature, but with its redemption. Yet what a piece of work is a man! What an amalgam of contradictions, what a medley of opposites—the paragon of animals, the quintessence of dust. Our purest affections are rooted in physical instincts. The senses themselves seem to connect us with a supersensual world. This strange dependence of spirit upon matter for its basis and its vehicle has been described as the deep, sacra-

mental secret of our being. At any rate we may not put asunder in theory what God has so fearfully and wonderfully joined in life. Nevertheless it is true that "man's bodily nature in its relation to his spiritual nature will always, in a greater or less degree, be found to be a house of bondage." To many Christian minds there appears something humbling about the very conditions of their lot on earth, as though the soul had kept not its first estate in God's bosom, but was made subject unto vanity by its birth into this material world. The New Testament indeed teaches no doctrine of pre-existence; yet the dreams of the mystics sometimes stray backwards to when they

> . . . knew not yet the gauge of time,
> Nor wore the manacles of space.

And the Apostle himself writes as if he felt our bodily necessities to constitute in themselves a burden and a cross to the inner man.

Who has properly described the amazing paradox of human existence? How grotesque it often seems to possess such powers and faculties imprisoned in such limitations. The heir of immortality is compelled to spend half his time in eating and washing and sleeping. The philosopher is tormented with toothache. The

saint stammers at his prayers. The poet can count himself king of infinite space, and yet he has bad dreams. The infallible Pope is choked by a fly. It is this immense irony in mortal affairs, this mingled greatness and littleness of man, which barbs the satire of Swift, and lurks under Shakespeare's inscrutable smile, and bewilders great masters of Christian thought like Newman and Pascal. The unspeakable contrast between our aspirations and our necessities makes the standing anomaly of life. And the perception of it lies at the root of what we call humour. For humour depends on this profound incongruity between the actual and the ideal. Perhaps it is one sign of our humiliation that we can appear so ridiculous to one another, and sometimes so absurd to ourselves. When the incongruity passes beyond a certain point, it becomes painful and revolting. We say it is profane, or obscene; and those two words stand for different aspects of the same contradiction between man's physical and spiritual nature. Both would be impossible for mere brutes and impossible for abstract intelligences. But in humanity the soul of the angel blends with the body of the beast: it is *our humiliation.*

There are times and seasons when we wake up keenly to this aspect of earthly experience.

We chafe and rebel against its strange indignities and contradictions, which baffle and sadden the soul. As one result of our bodily needs and appetites there follows our industrial routine. Men, who must eat to live, must work to eat. Improve the social order as we may, this world will remain a hard, stern place, a valley of humiliation for most of its inhabitants. We submit to our daily drudgery as a matter of course. We have no alternative. We have been drilled into it by the patient toil of a hundred generations. We even learn to say, "Blessed be drudgery." But sometimes, as we consider God's lilies which toil not neither spin and His birds which have neither storehouse nor barn, the thought dawns upon us that to eat bread in the sweat of the brow is not the permanent destiny of sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty. So also as regards the dark problem of our physical pains. We can trace little direct connection between a man's misdeeds and his sicknesses and sufferings. Disease and decay come upon the holiest saints, as surely as they visit the worst sinners. No optimist "gospel of healthy-mindedness" can ever persuade us that we are not part of a groaning and travailing creation. We are made subject unto vanity against our will. And sooner or later the final

humiliation lies in wait for us, one by one. As Pascal said: "The last act is always tragedy: *on mourra seul*, we shall die alone."

And even while we live, these mortal bodies with their ignoble necessities, their often infirmities, enclose us like prisons in that they conceal their inmates. They cut us off from one another. Who has not mourned over the inadequacy of human expression? The lover finds no words to utter his tenderness. The artist has no power to portray his haunting vision. The dull, plain-spoken man can never make himself properly understood, as he longs and strives to be. We gaze out wistfully through the windows of our isolation, we call and signal to each other across the severing spaces, but we cannot penetrate the barriers of personality to touch the real self who dwells captive there. Each of us must live his truest life in solitude, aloof and apart from his kind. And when we suffer the penalty of loneliness and fall into mutual misunderstanding or estrangement, when even Christians cannot be brought to realize the wrongs which they are inflicting on each other, this also is part of our humiliation.

The anomaly of human nature and human life grows distressing when we ponder it. Yet it would be fatal for us to forget it, or to treat it as

though it were an illusion. The mistakes of the ascetic and the anchorite are trifling compared with the blindness of the secular, sensual man. The doom to dread is that we become subdued by our mortal environment—" tamed in earth's paddock, as her prize." In *Little Dorrit* the horror and curse of long confinement arrived when the debtor had grown naturalized and acclimatized in his prison, and felt proud to be called " the father of the Marshalsea." These physical appetites and necessities of ours have, in themselves, nothing common or unclean. They possess no inherent evil. But in their quality and character they are of the earth, earthy. And man's supreme instinct is that which makes him always a stranger and pilgrim upon earth, encamped here, but never properly domesticated, because his heart and his treasure are otherwhere. The romance of literature is filled with pictures of strange humiliation. The banished duke keeping court on the greensward in Arden, the foundling princess bred up under a shepherd's roof in Bohemia, are like parables of the spirit of man in exile, waiting for the times of the restitution of all things when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

The Gospel discloses the purpose and meaning of our humiliation. He who has made us what

we are and has placed us where we are, desires above all things that we learn humility. The first of His beatitudes belongs to the poor in spirit. So one main function of these physical necessities is to serve as a discipline for the soul, to tame our pride, to wean us from self-pleasing, to subdue our self-will, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Let humiliation therefore have its perfect work. This is the road, strange and hard and unexpected, along which God brings his sons unto glory at last. This is the pathway which the Eternal Word has trodden. Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part in the same. By His unspeakable humiliation He has illuminated and redeemed our own. Christ explains our low estate by sharing it. He teaches us how we too must be made perfect through those very things which appear the signs and instruments of imperfection. The use and meaning of them all are to conform us to Himself.

He shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory. Such a mighty promise, from its very nature, must transcend our ideas and expectations as to its fulfilment. No human thought can imagine what is that transformation by which

this corruptible shall inherit incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. Yet the doctrine of the Resurrection, impossible though it be to express in categories of time and sense, corresponds with the mysterious duality of human nature. "It is this belief which brings with it all that is actual and personal into our future life; all, too, that is homely and familiar; that gives us back our friends, looking and talking as they did here; gives us back our feelings and occupations, in fact our lives. For the body is, after all, the home of the soul, endeared, even like the actual home, by the very sorrows that have been endured within it; and we can conceive of nothing entered upon in separation from it, that is worthy to be called life." It hath not entered into our hearts to conceive what God shall fashion for them that love Him. It is enough that when that which is perfect is come, that which was in part shall be done away. As we have borne the image of the earthy we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. All our purified powers and faculties will harmonize with their transfigured expression. By the influx of Christ's endless life, the soul shall be endued with a symbol and instrument conformed to the glory of its Redeemer. Yet even then, looking back in remembrance, each saint will confess: "It was

good for me that I was humiliated." Surely that note belongs to the song which none can learn but those who have been redeemed from the earth.

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

IV

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE

When St. Paul warned the Corinthians that *knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up*, he was apparently aware of the incipient germs of one chief peril in the early Church. The "knowledge" which the Apostle deprecated stands for what we might call theosophical speculation. And hard-headed Englishmen find it difficult to realize the regions in which such speculation once ran riot. Men who heard the Christian Gospel brooded over those insoluble questions which the Gospel never pretends to solve. How could Infinite Deity limit Himself by creating finite spirits? How could evil intrude into the universe of the all-perfect Goodness? Questions like those are as old as human thought. They arise out of the paradox of our mortal existence. If we have learnt that they are not to be answered here, it is partly by reason of the vain attempts

made to solve them long ages ago. For the subtlest brains in the world wearied themselves for generations over these Gnostic problems. They engineered cloudy bridges across the gulf between the finite and the infinite. They spun endless metaphysical cobwebs to account for the co-existence of good and evil. They lived in a sort of spiritual wonderland, aloof from vulgar facts and prosaic duties, high above the common herd of men. Compared with ordinary, uninstructed Christian folk, the Gnostic considered himself an altogether superior person. What did it matter to such an illuminated soul whether or not the meat he bought at the shambles had been consecrated to the idol of the market-place? He had "knowledge," forsooth, and St. Paul adds, half-sarcastically, "We know that we all have knowledge." Naturally, such knowledge was the parent of pride. The Christian Gnostic trusted that he himself was enlightened, and looked down upon others.

Englishmen in the twentieth century feel no temptation to indulge in theosophical speculation. Professor Gwatkin, indeed, describes Gnosticism as a kind of poetry, but he confesses that it is poetry which has gone hopelessly out of fashion. Nevertheless, the Apostle's warning

words still convey a profound and salutary warning. There is a present-day knowledge which we all overrate—an enlightenment which we are eager to obtain and proud to display. Modern science, indeed, seems almost the exact opposite of the old Gnostic dreams. Knowledge, in our sense of the word, is an immense blessing. Scholarship, education, scientific discovery are names for God's great and precious gifts to us in these latter days. Yet we must rate them at their true value and keep them in their proper place, lest they inflate us with vain-glorious conceit. All our skill and learning are but dust in God's balance, weighed against sympathy and tenderness and self-devotion. Concerning the fabric of character, it remains true that knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.

In common experience we find that possessions breed conceit. The man who rapidly grows rich grows arrogant also, and patronises his old friends. The man who wins reputation forthwith contracts that disease which in America is described as "swelled head." And when we consider it, we understand why knowledge so often produces a similar result. For knowledge is a relative thing. Like wealth, it implies excess over other men's

defect. If all the world became millionaires, there would be no one left to call rich. If we were all levelled up to the intellectual standard of professors of philosophy, there would be no one left to call wise. It is of the essence of learning to distinguish its owner from his fellows, and just to that extent his knowledge becomes his danger. He is always being tempted to thank God that he is not like poor ignorant fools. Now love, on the contrary, is difficult just in proportion to other men's lack of it. To feel generous in selfish company is like keeping warm in an ice-house. But the more affection is lavished on us, the more easily we can respond with affection—as it is written : "We love Him, because He first loved us." Perhaps if all men were entirely unselfish, we might be able to love them all unselfishly, and to bless God that we were even as they were, even as He is Himself. Again, what we call knowledge is not only relative to other men's ignorance, but relative to absolute truth. The wisest man on earth understands very little about what there is to be known. Darwin confessed with characteristic modesty : "All our knowledge of this planet is something like an old hen's knowledge of a forty-acre field, in one corner of which she happens to be scratch-

ing." The scientific philosopher has learned something about the appearances of things in this corner of the universe; he has hardly laid a finger on ultimate facts. Whereas love belongs to the very nature of things. A tender-hearted man is, by that token, in touch with the Absolute and the Everlasting. Amid time's shadows and illusions he has experience of the one enduring Reality. He is united with that love which was in the beginning, and is now, and ever shall be. For God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

In *The Stones of Venice* Ruskin has analyzed this contrast in his own penetrating way: "We continually fall into error by considering the intellectual powers as having dignity in themselves, and separable from the heart. The intellect going through the same processes is yet mean, or noble, according to the matter it deals with. And it wastes itself away in mere rotary motion if it be set to grind straws and dust. If we reason only respecting words and lines, or any trifling or finite things, the reason becomes a contemptible faculty. But it becomes a sacred faculty as it is applied to direct the work of the soul—the work which proceeds from the impulses of a quick, percep-

tive, and eager heart. As we understand fully this pre-eminence of the soul, we understand the subordination of mere knowledge. The increase of knowledge does not make the soul larger or smaller. In the sight of God, all the knowledge man can gain is nothing. But the soul, for which the great scheme of redemption was laid, be it ignorant or be it wise, is all in all. In the activity, strength, health, and well-being of the soul lies the main difference in God's sight between one man and another. And what is all in all in God's estimate is also, be assured, all in all in men's labour. To have the heart open and the eyes clear and the emotions and thoughts warm and quick—that, and not the knowing of this or the other fact, is the state needed for all mighty doing in the world." Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.

We may apply this principle to our estimate of education. Modern thought lays enormous stress upon teaching and training the young. Yet too often we take education to mean increase of knowledge, and so we rear students chiefly in order that they may succeed in passing examinations. A striking passage occurs in Mark Pattison's *Memoirs* — that melancholy book—

where he deplores the results of the new educational methods which he himself did so much to introduce at Oxford. "A young man is put in possession of ready-made notions on every conceivable subject — a crude mass of matter which he is taught to regard as real knowledge. Swollen with this puffy and unwholesome diet, he goes forth to the world, regarding himself, like the infant of the nursery, as the centre of all things, the measure of the universe." In its best and truest sense, education must involve what books cannot teach and examiners cannot scrutinize. When a boy comes home from school, we question him about his progress: What scholarships has he gained? What prizes and certificates has he brought back? Where does he stand in his form? How much does he know? If we are Christians, we ought to be concerned about far deeper questions. We ought to ask: Is he affectionate? Is he generous? Is he modest? Does he flush into hot anger when he sees anything mean or cruel? Does he win the hearts of his companions? Does he make friends easily? Does he keep the friends he has made? These are the qualities which really build up a boy's character. When we pray for our children, let us covet earnestly the best

gifts for them. Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up.

The same Divine standard must govern our judgment of ourselves. There come times and seasons when a man has to stop and ask himself: How much have I changed in these last ten or twenty years? Have I altered for better or for worse? I have learned many things in the experience of life. I have read quantities of books. I know far more than I knew once. But all that may profit me nothing. I may only be growing unconsciously into a pedant like Mr. Casaubon—a learned, arid, pretentious fool. The vital questions which measure my progress towards God are questions like these: Is my heart larger and deeper than it was once, and more tender and more reverent and more enthusiastic? Am I more sensitive to other men's needs, and more concerned about their sins, and more pitiful over their troubles, and more eager to help their pain? Is my temper more gentle, and my affection more ardent, and my loyalty more steadfast, and my sympathy more catholic, and my passion more pure? Qualities like these constitute the real gauge of character. "A man's love is the test of his fitness for good or bad company, here or elsewhere." Every mystic testifies that it is only

by processes of fuller and fuller love that we can rise nearer to God.

Let us give heed, therefore, to this measureless difference between knowing and loving. Seldom since the age of Gnostic speculation have men been more tempted to ignore it. As Cudworth says quaintly: "The sons of Adam are now as busy as ever himself was about the tree of knowledge, shaking the boughs thereof and scrambling for the fruit, whilst I fear many are too unmindful of that other tree which is the tree of life." We are dazzled by the magnificent conquests of science. Like men heady with new wine, we grow intoxicated with pride in the wonderful ideas and inventions which come crowding upon us in these fast-changing times. We look back disdainfully at the benighted generations when newspapers and telephones and motor-cars and air-ships were unknown. And yet, with all our new knowledge, the profound realities of man's existence, its needs and its yearnings, are not changed a whit. Mr. Frederic Harrison cannot be called an obscurantist, and he bears this testimony: "Every aspect and appliance of practical life has been transformed within my own memory, and yet in all its essential conditions human life remains the same." It is the same with us to-day as it was

with St. Paul or with Plato, who fancied that the sun went round the earth. How much are we bettered by knowing that the earth goes round the sun? The same sun shines on us that shone on them. The same temptations torment us, the same mysteries baffle us, the same sorrows pierce us, the same grave waits for us in a little space. The deep hungers and hopes of human nature do not alter. They were not invented by man's cleverness; they are rooted in the fibres of his heart. If we can live in large houses and travel fast, does that bring us any nearer to Him who walked the earth as a wayfaring Man and had not where to lay His head? Even unlettered, uncivilized folk in dark ages have known how to follow Him and adore Him. For His sake they were found guilty of excess of love. Do we respond more nobly to that Divine passion whereby He is able to subdue all hearts unto Himself? Alas for us, if our added light and learning make us despise those simple men who had no wit nor skill nor science, except to read God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The day is at hand for us when only one thing will seem worth taking account of. All our other treasures must wither and wax old and vanish away, every other gift and possession and attainment we must part

from and leave behind us, but love can be ours immortally.

> Aye, and when prophecy her tale has finished,
> Knowledge has withered from the trembling tongue,
> Love shall survive, and love be undiminished,
> Love be imperishable, love be young.

And if any man love God, the same is known of Him. But he that loveth not knoweth not God: for God is love.

WHAT THINGS YE HAVE NEED OF

V

WHAT THINGS YE HAVE NEED OF

As we study the Sermon on the Mount its theology falls, for the most part, under two main headings. Like the "golden gate on golden hinges turning," our Lord's teaching in this Sermon hangs upon His doctrine of Providence and upon His doctrine of Prayer. And the ultimate truth underlying both doctrines He summed up in the sentence: *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.* How could God be the Father of our spirits, in any real sense, if He did not see us and know us altogether, if He were not perfectly at home in the natures and needs of the children whom He has made? The ancient Psalm of Divine Omniscience builds upon this foundation: *Thou hast searched me and known me . . . Thine eyes did see my imperfect substance. My frame was not hidden from Thee when I was wrought in secret . . . Marvellous*

are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. A mortal mind can be perplexed and baffled by its own inventions. Such a monster as Frankenstein might well confound its presumptuous maker. But the Almighty Wisdom comprehends the secrets of each soul into whom He has breathed a spark of His own Being. This human nature, which God framed after His image and likeness, He understands with the fellow-feeling of a Spirit akin to our spirits. And since by the mystery of the Incarnation His Love has been found in fashion as a man, we can believe that, in the profoundest sense of the words, *He knoweth what things we have need of.*

For many a man it is the worst misery of life that he does not possess a single friend who thoroughly understands him. No other person can turn the key of that secret chamber where his real self dwells solitary and apart. He himself is proud or shy or reserved, and so he goes on his lonely way through the world, isolated, misinterpreted, thirsty for sympathy which no one seems able to bestow. Yet however grievously we may be misjudged and misunderstood by our fellow-men, we can always reckon on the absolute sympathy of God. Human parents sometimes fail, in spite of their

affection, to enter into the heart and thought of a little child. A father may outgrow that subtle, delicate instinct which should teach him by intuition what his children are feeling and needing. Too often in an earthly home the elders have somehow lost touch with the children, because they forget what it means to be young. But God's everlasting sympathy is as fresh and tender and all-embracing as it was in the beginning, as it ever shall be. In His Being all stages of our experience find their correspondence and counterpart. The Ancient of days is Himself the Eternal Child.

Upon this certainty of God's sympathetic knowledge of each man's nature and condition, Christ bases His method and rule of prayer. For if once we realize that our Heavenly Father understands us utterly and feels for us entirely and knows precisely what we lack, then our praying becomes natural and simple and easy. And yet when most men kneel down to speak with God, they have so little of this childlike confidence that they persist in trying to explain themselves to Him. They use cumbrous entreaties and apologies, they repeat formal confessions, they grow elaborate and stilted and artificial as soon as they attempt to pray. Yet if you are alone, face to face with your most

intimate friend, you fall naturally into plain and easy language, you speak quite freely and simply, and when the right words are wanting, you say, "I cannot express myself, but you know what I mean." And your friend catches each hint, and his sympathy is quick to fill in your broken sentences, and he can guess their drift and anticipate their purport before ever they are completed; he does know what you mean. If we then, being selfish, can thus enter into each other's thoughts and feelings, how much more shall our Father in heaven know what things we have need of before we ask Him? When, for instance, we try to confess our sins, we cannot remember half of them, nor distinguish properly between those that we remember. We do not know which part of our pride, our coldness, our selfish neglect, really shows blackest in the sight of God. How could we ever confess, if our Father did not know for what sins we need to be forgiven before our confessions begin? As we look up from the depths of self-abasement, often we have no other words but these: "O Lord, Thou knowest. It is our one hope and comfort that Thou seest and knowest us altogether. And Thou art our Father still."

So, again, when we come to ask not merely for pardon, but for sunshine and healing and

strength and courage and joy, our most effectual prayer is the acknowledgment of our own ignorance, the affirmation of God's knowledge, the humble acceptance of God's will. Which of us understands his own present need so well that he dare dictate the special details of its supply? Those are not prayers in the name of Christ which indulge in a long list of miscellaneous demands, according to the self-will of the petitioner. Perhaps the most Fatherly of God's mercies is to answer such prayers by granting us the very opposite of what we cried out for as the one thing we had need of. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from secret faults . . . from the pride which I, perchance, cherish as a manly virtue, from the self-regard which spoils my purest sacrifice, from the self-deceit which persuades me that already I am clean, every whit. Keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins and presumptuous prayers, O Searcher of hearts, who knowest what things I have need of before ever I try to pray." And if we are ignorant of our present needs, still less can we foresee what emergencies will beset us in the future. To-morrow's sudden temptation, next week's intoxicating success, next month's bitter bereavement, next year's lingering sickness —we cannot guess what grace we shall need to

bear either the sorrows or the joys which are in store for us, according to the will of God. We can only ask Him who knows the end from the beginning to arm us with all might by His Spirit in the inner man. We can only be persuaded that neither things present nor things to come shall be able to separate us from His love. Thus this deep reality of our blindness and our Father's perfect knowledge must humble and chasten every prayer into childlike submission. We should, indeed, express all our specific desires and requests to God, conscious the while that they are only ignorant and childish. But Thomas Erskine of Linlathen pointed towards a great truth when he suggested that the final revision of the liturgy would be silence.

If this principle holds good in regard to our petitions for ourselves, how much more does it apply to our intercessions for those whom we love? Our tenderest sympathy with them is imperfect, and our clearest wisdom marred by mistake. When we covet earnestly the best gifts for a friend and the highest calling for a child, we are ignorant of what those desires may entail. What is the highest, and what will prove the best? We cannot tell—God knoweth. So when we utter those names which are never absent from our prayers, it must be in the faith

that our Father knoweth what things they have need of, who are so dear to us but dearer still to Him. This was the faith which prompted St. Paul's great assurance for his friends: "*My* God shall supply all *your* need, according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." And when our prayer, taught by the Spirit, crosses the limits of family and friendship as our hearts are drawn out to intercede for Christ's Church throughout the world, and for His scattered as well as His folded sheep, we must still pray after this manner. Our Father knoweth what are the wants of humanity, as surely as He feels for its sorrows. History is a record of the way in which God, who understands human nature, has chosen to educate and discipline the generations of man. It seems a fearful and wonderful way; but it is God's way, little though we can grasp it. We marvel at the slow ages of struggle and anguish which even our imperfect civilization has cost. We stand aghast as we turn the leaves of Time's book, blotted with blood and tears. We shudder at the groaning and travailing amid which, in our own days, a better order is struggling to be born. But though we are ignorant and fearful, our Father knoweth what things the world hath need of before His kingdom can come with power.

Let us call home such far-travelling thoughts

to rest in this ultimate assurance from our Lord's own lips, which contains the cure for all fretfulness, the secret of all patience as well as of all prayer. Most of us feel that we ourselves belong to the category of the needy. Constantly we have to do without things. Perhaps we are secretly rebelling against straitened circumstances and a hard lot. Perhaps we dream at times of what great deeds we could do, not for ourselves alone but for other men, if only we were richer. Yet surely our Father knoweth what money we have need of, and how much He can afford to entrust to our stewardship. A working man once declared savagely that it is easy to tell what God thinks about money, if you notice the people to whom He gives it. Certainly He does not reckon it among His best gifts. Christ has taught us that the love of it, and not the lack of it, is a root of every kind of evil. And when He came Himself as a carpenter and uttered His beatitude on the poor, He proved that wealth is not the first or the greatest of the real needs of man. Many persons, again, chafe and fret their souls because they find so little scope and opportunity for their individual gifts. We are conscious of abilities with no room for their exercise; perhaps we think we possess the seed of genius without the climate or soil in which it can blossom. At any rate, we

hunger for some sort of recognition and encouragement in our own special line. Nevertheless, this is a faithful saying: "Our Father knoweth what success we have need of." His highest calling and election for us in this world may not be what we think is necessary to expand our gifts and develop our tastes. Election means choice; and God is too Fatherly to suffer us to choose our own circumstances. He has prepared some better thing for us; and there will be time enough in heaven to fulfil all the purified ambitions of earth.

When we walk through the wards of a crowded hospital faith finds it hard to say: "Your Father knoweth what health ye have need of." Yet we discover how there are spiritual lessons only to be learned in weakness, there is a heavenly discipline wrought out through pain, for which nothing else in the world can be a substitute. The sick chamber and the cripple's couch may be stages in a Divine education, without which some souls cannot be made perfect. And the same truth applies to the failure not merely of health, but of plans and hopes and efforts. When our labour goes unrequited and our sacrifice seems thrown away, God makes us aware that He cares not at all for our triumph but only for our submission, and He teaches us to lay our

very failures on the altar of His will. Perhaps the dreariest earthly deprivation comes when we are bankrupt of affection. It is hard indeed to sit solitary and to walk apart because our trust has been betrayed and we were wounded in the house of our friends. Many a lonely man carries empty niches in his heart which this life will never see filled again. But our Father knoweth what solace we have need of. Perchance He has suffered the aching void to be, so that He may make room for Himself within—so that we may learn at last how nothing short of His own infinite love can satisfy the longing soul, or can fill the abysmal deeps of personality which He created and which He alone understands. He has made us for Himself, so that no lower good can suffice us in His stead. And therefore, as God Himself is the supreme need of each spirit, so God Himself is the final answer to every prayer.

THE SIN OF THE MASTERFUL MAN

VI

THE SIN OF THE MASTERFUL MAN

When our Lord pointed His accusing finger at the chief priests and scribes, He impeached a great popular party which was dominant both in Church and State. Politics and theology were interfused in Judea, just as they blended in Germany at the age of the Reformation and in England during the years of the Commonwealth. The influential rabbis of Palestine ranked as national leaders. And Christ discerned and reproved in these Pharisees the characteristic vices of men who make religion a stepping-stone to power. He rebuked their rigid formalism, their haughty self-importance, their pompous self-advertisement. He exposed their hunger for social prominence, their parade of high-sounding titles, their craving for the outward marks of dignity and public esteem. And our Lord warns His disciples, with solemn iteration, against such an example and such a spirit. He denounces and

condemns this sin of masterfulness, as it breaks out even among those who follow the Lamb.

For surely this is one of the easiest and subtlest of sins, to which we are continually solicited, not by our weakness, but by our very strength. The temptation to grow masterful occurs to every one placed in a superior position or conscious of special ability. Even the old-fashioned form of courtesy by which common men and women are styled *Mr.* and *Mrs.* serves to remind us that we all have occasions and opportunities of asserting ourselves above other people. To possess power of any kind appeals to the self-importance of human nature. A capable man always longs to manage affairs over the heads of the crowd; he knows that he can do their business so much more effectually than they can do it for themselves. A clever man grows angry and intolerant in face of common stupidity. A strong man can hardly help pushing on restlessly to the front; he feels, not without justice, that he is merely taking his rightful place. And so each of them in turn is possessed by the same arrogant, overbearing spirit—as though his personal gifts and powers were not a sacred trust and charge committed to him by the will of God.

Yet we see not less plainly how the masterful temper, when it is indulged unchecked, breeds

ruinous results in character. Slowly, it may be, but fatally, you grow haughty and imperious and self-centred and self-sufficient until you have forgotten what humbleness and gentleness mean. Moreover, you always harm those other characters over whom you have, perhaps with the best intentions, begun to dominate. You spoil their independence and self-respect. You crush out their individuality and initiative and reduce them in time to mere underlings. Even a benevolent despotism must inflict this double mischief. And in our tame modern world we can but faintly guess how sheer wilfulness ran riot in earlier ages and among primitive men. The names of shadowy conquerors like Sesostris and Sennacherib suggest a colossal tyranny which to us seems scarcely human—an unbridled lust for dominion such as Marlowe strove to picture in his Tamburlaine. The sin reaches its spiritual climax in Milton's archangel, who refused to serve in heaven that he might reign in hell.

Yet in milder aspect and less monstrous shape the self-same evil spirit haunts and infects men still. It brings misery to many a fireside. In English cottages a woman will often speak of her husband as "my master," unaware of the pathetic betrayal that lurks in that phrase. Mr. Barrie has half-sketched and half-hinted at the domestic

tragedy of the masterful husband. Which of us has not seen how such a man can degenerate into a family tyrant, whose wife and children and dependents cringe at his will? St. Paul declares that every household must have its head, in words which grate on certain modern theorists. But the Apostle insists with equal emphasis that mastery means responsibility. The stronger is bound by his strength to give honour to the weaker, and to share her burdens and infirmities with unselfish love. There are other homes which exhibit a variation of this same evil. Some specially gifted member of the family exacts unbounded deference. All the rest must give way to this favoured person, for whom incense is kept burning on a private altar. Even so noble a man as Wordsworth suffered injury from a lifetime of quite sincere adulation in his own house. We all look for sympathy at home, and consolation, and a warm shelter from the east wind outside. Yet the tenderest critics will be often the wisest and the most salutary. It fares ill in that house where love has been muzzled, and dares not hint at failings or mistakes.

The same temptation to be masterful steals in between parents and their children. How helplessly these little bodies and minds are put

into our power. Ought we not to humble ourselves every day before this strange, awful charge which God entrusts to us, when He says, *Take this child and nurse it for Me?* Yet even a mother can domineer in her nursery. Alas! that the best of us should sadden and bewilder our children by harshness and impatience. When they vex our superiority most sorely, a Voice whispers, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these.* More plainly still, this evil may enter into the dealings between a master and mistress and their servants. The essence of slavery lay in the fact that a human being was considered as a mere chattel. And are there no modern houses where servants miss their due rights, because no respect or regard is shown to them as persons? You may pay liberal wages, and yet sin against Christ's spirit, if you suffer yourselves to think of your servants merely as convenient tools, which you have hired for your private use.

And so throughout life's wider relationships we meet the same temptation to be masterful, on a larger scale. The head of an office, and the manager of a firm, and the chairman of a company, are all indispensable to God's present ordering of the world. There must needs be the power of the directing brain, of the con-

trolling will. But to own such power is a sacred trust, which should make a man humble rather than self-important. The true kings and leaders of the race are bowed down under this solemn burden which God has laid upon their shoulders. Masterfulness occurs far less often among the real chiefs than among their subordinates. It is the sergeants in a regiment and not the colonel, the foremen in a factory and not the owner, who indulge in petty domineering. The consciousness of great power sobers and restrains. But man, dressed in a little brief authority, will make the angels weep. Across the Atlantic a slang word has been coined which exactly embodies this evil temper which our Lord condemns. The spirit of the "boss" is always the spirit of Antichrist—whether you meet it at home or in business, in politics or in religion. For it intrudes into the Church of God. Again and again our Lord warned His chosen Apostles against hankering after personal greatness and dominion. And, in truth, no one will be more naturally tempted to grow masterful than the man with a sense of a supernatural commission to his fellows. In their disputings about what thrones they should occupy, the Apostles have found successors innumerable. History exhibits no other arrogance comparable with the pride

of scarlet prelates who wrote themselves *servi servorum Dei.* The most hateful and insolent tyranny on earth has been wielded by popes and priests and inquisitors. And this intolerant, domineering temper is no monopoly of any one communion. Whenever a Christian teacher exalts himself on his official position, and adopts the self-important, *ex cathedrâ* tone and air, he sins against the word and will of Jesus Christ. And he can achieve this, though he be only a local preacher in a village conventicle. Among all the causes which have conspired to exalt priesthood in Christ's Church, not the least potent has been the love of mastery in priests themselves. And it is fatally true that this "exaggerated conception of the place and functions of the Christian ministry has operated more than any other cause to alienate men's minds from the faith of Christ." The evil done by masterful ministers lives after them, while in their own souls they forfeit the meekness and gentleness and humility without which we have no proper place or attitude before our Lord. For He who said, *Be not ye called masters,* added also, *Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well, for so I am.* Can words deepen the unfathomable gulf thus defined between the holiest saint and the Saviour? And was it not partly

to remind himself of this that St. Paul so often begins an epistle by linking together his own proudest and humblest titles—*an Apostle—and a slave—of Jesus Christ?* For those who live and preach and labour ever as in their great Taskmaster's eye, the masterful spirit becomes impossible. There is found no place left for it in the vision of the great White Throne.

THE ANTIDOTE TO HURRY

VII

THE ANTIDOTE TO HURRY

We have plenty of English proverbs in which the common sense of the past declares how futile and foolish it is to be in a hurry. Present experience teaches the same lesson. We find in practice how often undue eagerness will defeat its own end. Even in sports you miss the prize when you try to force the game. The first rule of golf, and the last, and the hardest to keep, is summed up in one simple maxim, "Don't press." And it is a rule for every kind of contest. In business, men fail by precipitancy quite as often as by slackness. The whole conduct of life proves "raw haste" to be "half-sister to delay."

In these days of mental and physical tension it sounds belated to argue against the spirit of an age which is rushing faster every year. Yet that fact only shows how sorely we need an antidote to the hurry that is in the world. And, after all

a society must stand condemned which has lost its leisure. The eastern anchorite musing in his cell makes a far more rational figure than the Chicago speculator shrieking on his stock-exchange. Each exemplifies the falsehood of extremes; but to compete in perpetual fever is deadlier than to dream of eternal peace. Surely there is something humiliating about this scramble and bustle of modern civilization. When a Western immigrant complained to an old Indian chief that he had so little time, "Well," said the red-skin, grimly, "I suppose you have all there is." "If I had the power," wrote John Foster, "of touching a large part of mankind with a spell, it should be this short sentence: *Be quiet, be quiet.*"

Yet it follows from the conditions of the case that nothing great or serious or lasting can ever be done in a hurry. People rush to be rich, and gamble for the fortune which they will not wait to earn. But even they are hardly absurd enough to rush to be wise. They understand that learning at least cannot be gained at express speed. Education, if it deserves its name, must always be a slow, deliberate, gradual thing. Some new schemes for improving children's minds forget to consider the lilies, how they grow, without making haste; they are lilies of the field, not

forced in a hothouse before their time. Nature herself rebukes our human eagerness with the example of her inexpressible patience. Her work is so matchless because she has taken millenniums to finish it; in making her lilies fair and fragrant she has counted a thousand years as one day.

And the children of Nature who love her, and the students of Nature who explore her secrets, catch some measure of this same patient spirit. The greatest naturalist of our time devoted eight whole years almost entirely to a monograph on barnacles, and summed up a course of observations which had gone on through more than thirty years in his book on earthworms. The like temper is characteristic of the artist as well. He has so much sympathy with Nature that he rarely permits himself to hurry over his picture or his poem. Genius cannot afford to be driven. In fact, nothing seriously worth doing can be done by a man out of breath.

And this principle which common sense justifies in common affairs, and which necessity enforces in education and science and art, holds good even more absolutely in religion. Faith and hurry are mutually incompatible. The one must finally banish the other from the soul. The record of our Lord's life is full of strange, serene leisure.

His Father's business was done for thirty quiet years at Nazareth. The Son of God served so long an apprenticeship of patience before His ministry began. And afterwards, when He became the vortex of eddying multitudes, He never showed a trace of hurry or excitement. Through all those crowded days of healing and controversy, He never knew what it was to be feverish or flurried or distraught. He moved like a king in his own realm, master of the pageant that stays for his pleasure. So Christ passed deliberately on to His appointed and accepted end. When Herod sought to kill Him, He could answer, "I must go on My way to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following." The Father had given Him His work to finish, and in that faith He made no haste. Even on the night of the betrayal, when Judas had been told, "What thou doest, do quickly," Jesus Himself lingered in the upper room to eat and sing and pray with His friends, until the hour was come to say, "Arise, let us be going." Our Lord went through His death as He had gone through His life, in the tranquillity of perfect trust.

Too often we preach His Gospel as though its chief watchword were not rest, but haste. And indeed there are crises in experience when haste does become the soul's first duty. Our

good angels lay their hands on us imperiously to draw us from pollution, as they urged Lot out of the doomed city. Or we must make speed, like Zacchaeus, to open the door for the Love who designs this day to be our guest. Or, again, the resurrection tidings on our lips will brook no tarrying, as when the Easter dew in the star-lit garden was scattered by their feet who ran quickly to bring the disciples word. Yet so soon as we look below the surface, we find that the inward life itself cannot be pressed or hastened. Man's deepest virtues are rooted in the dark, and spring up secretly after many days and nights, he knoweth not how. The heart has its times and seasons, and the best fruits of the Spirit only ripen slowly and come to perfection unawares. We can be patient with a tardy Christian experience when once we realize that growth in grace does not finally depend on ourselves, but that the Author of faith must be Himself its Finisher. To believe in God's predestinating Love, His thought about us, His care over us, His choice concerning us, is to be redeemed from hurry of spirit. The foundations of character are laid by unseen hands upon the rock, and its fabric rises like the walls of the fabled city, "built to music, and therefore built for ever." For its architect and craftsman is God.

What fellowship hath faith with hurry? For faith means that the centre of energy and expectancy is shifted from myself to my Saviour. Each feverish striving subsides into pure content with the Divine Will. The heart that believes becomes instantly a heart at leisure, and quells its impulse to human impatience with the Psalmist's answer: *This is mine infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.*

No other temper can fulfil the greatest tasks. The reformer will grow hysterical over political delays unless he can believe with Gordon that "God is Governor-general." The anarchist rages to end this present social system which he despairs of mending, because he denies that it has an invisible Ruler and Restorer. And Christians themselves often mar their labour for souls because they hanker too much after rapid results and immediate successes and speedy conversions. No English apostle carried home more sheaves with him than John Wesley, and he said of his own sowing and reaping, "I am never in a hurry." It is a glory of the Roman Church to have planned and persevered in immense imperial enterprises, where haste was impossible and success lay for generations out of sight. Absolute belief in Christ and His commission is

our one stay amid all the disappointments of the mission field. Maybe, too, it is not faith but doubt which demands a speedy Advent. He who promised, "Behold, I come quickly," spoke out of the fulness of His own eternity. And even while we pray passionately for His steps among the stars to quicken, we are confident of this:

> God never is before His time,
> And never is behind.

The believer's highest call and election here will often be to possess his soul in patience. His calling may be only to stand and wait in time's market-place; his election may prove only to sit and watch at God's doors; his whole life may slip by, bankrupt of most things except its imperishable peace. But his faith shall be justified in the end, when it inherits whatsoever things God hath prepared for them that wait for Him. The old familiar dreams of that eternal recompense are sometimes denounced as cheap and unworthy. The life to come, we are told, should be "conceived not as a devotional exercise, nor as a passive felicity, but as the prolongation of all generous energies and the unison of all high desires." Yet we must expect heaven to be at least a place where no desire is feverish and no energy is strained and overwrought, where no one any longer is in a hurry.

THE SCORN OF SCORN

VIII

THE SCORN OF SCORN

Those unforgettable words of St. Paul, *Be not deceived : God is not mocked,* have been commonly interpreted as a warning to the profligate. Yet the context shows that they were intended rather as a solemn encouragement to the faithful. The apostle is writing not to terrify evildoers, but to cheer those good men who else might grow weary of sowing the good seed. And he invokes this profound and awful truth as an exceeding great and precious promise for all the dejected and disconsolate people of God. Christians in some respects are peculiarly apt to be deceived. The illusions of life can dazzle and perplex the wisest children of this world. But those who strive to walk by faith are doubly vexed by the falsehood of appearances. From the nature of the case their goal and their recompense must lie out of sight. The fair fruit of their labour hardly ripens in our earthly climate, and even the

bravest workers will faint and grow weary because after long husbandry they can discern hardly a trace of the blade and the ear. Which of us has never been pierced with a bitter sense of the vanity of his Christian efforts? How futile it all seems—this slow toil of trying to do good and trying to be good. There are times when the good cause itself looks little better than a failure. At this present the lovers of progress are passing through a "dreary, funereal season." Few of us can recall any period in our experience when brute force and reaction seemed so domina when liberty and peace seemed so discredited and depressed. Abroad the world has turned into one vast camp, and at home those giant evils against which reformers have battled for generations remain as impregnable as ever. The drink traffic and the gambling curse and the cult of the golden calf, when did they appear to be stronger in England than they appear to-day? The enemies of Christ's kingdom are still mighty and malignant, the great embodiments of iniquity baffle all our efforts to destroy them, and when the Church's strength is exhausted the powers of darkness seem to mock our impotent failure.

Then again, in our own private attempts at doing good, how often we get deceived and defrauded and taken in. You set your heart on

the salvation of some individual sinner. For his sake you spend time and money ungrudgingly, you pour out your affection and your prayers, so that if it be possible you may win that man back to righteousness. And, alas! at the end of the day you discover that he has only been imposing on your generosity; he was secretly sneering at you all the time. It is miserable enough to be defeated in such an endeavour, but to feel betrayed and derided is harder still. Yet further, not merely with regard to others, but even in our own characters, what a disappointment we often become to ourselves. How little headway we have actually made in holiness! What poor sheaves we carry home into God's storehouse and barn! Often we prove so much less than conquerors over those lusts that war against the soul —"the tremendous and subtle activity engaged on the side of evil custom, the selfishness, the hatred, the pride, the unfathomable ambitions which lord it over the heart of man, and trample on his conscience, and dim the light of reason and truth." To suffer experiences of failure such as these, within and without, may well reduce us at times into a kind of despair about religion. Our societies and charities, our schools, and churches, and Bibles, and sermons, and prayers—how much do they amount to after all? What are we

Christians but fond, deluded enthusiasts, tempted to whisper, "This also is a mockery and vanity"?

In such a faithless mood St. Paul checks us with his stern rebuke, *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.* We may lose heart and hope, but His will never wavers. We seem vanquished, but His dominion ruleth over all. Though we be faithless He abideth faithful, He cannot deny Himself. Whoever else is cheated and betrayed, there is no such thing as failure in the counsels of God. Our schemes and our works miscarry, but "the fabric of God's holy kingdom is slowly rising, while He patiently, but certainly, fulfils His purposes." The universe shall not disappoint its Creator and Redeemer at last.

The apostle grounds his strong confidence upon the principle of the spiritual harvest: *Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.* Results and causes will ultimately correspond. The nature of things works in order and makes no mistakes. Even in this world we do get, broadly and in the long run, that which we lay ourselves out to gain. It has often been remarked that our Lord endorses this principle in His own Beatitudes. He affirms that the soul's reward matches the soul's effort and expectation. If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, we shall be satisfied with righteousness, and with nothing

lower. We reap that which we sow the seed of, and not any other kind of grain. There are some Christians who repine and grow despondent because they do not find themselves reaping a harvest which they have no right to look for. If you hunger and thirst after riches or renown, rather than after righteousness, you may win them, on the same terms. If you devote yourself, body and soul, to becoming a successful man rather than a good man, you may probably succeed; only it is not possible to achieve both aims at once. We cannot lay up treasure in heaven without seeing that other men are able to lay up treasure faster than we can, on earth. A Christian might possibly grow rich as rapidly as some of his wealthy neighbours if he stooped to pay the same price for success. We, too, might reap what they are reaping, if we had chosen. Yet we grow envious and fret our souls at the sight of their prosperity—until we go into the sanctuary of God. But there, in the secret place of the Most High, we understand why St. Paul reckons only two kinds of sowing and two corresponding crops. *To sow to the flesh* includes far more than mere animalism. Self-gratification and self-advertisement, personal ambition and intellectual pride, all alike fall under this broad category of "the flesh." And the corruption which is its

proper harvest need not involve debauchery or flagrant scandal. Corruption, as George Macdonald puts it, is just the fate of the manna which was kept too long. "Corruptible things," wrote the apostle who began life as a fisherman, "such as—silver and gold." What a strange, quiet superiority to the baits and bribes of fortune! This pilot of the Galilean lake has only one verdict for the world's markets and money-changers. Many a man consents to tamper with his conscience for the sake of material profit; he gains wealth and position, and people say that he has succeeded. But the Bible lays its finger on his silver and gold, and whispers, "corruptible things." On the other hand, *he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.* Because each living seed grain carries its own miraculous vitality; and every tear of true repentance, every act of humble sacrifice, every impulse of unselfish love —each drop of the heart's spikenard, concerning which as it was spilt the cynics cried, "Why was this waste?"—becomes a spiritual germ, potent for infinite issues and fruitful beyond the stars.

What else but this strong conviction can sustain a minister? No man seems to himself to be mocked so often. No one feels more keenly how futile are his best efforts, how idle

and empty his strongest words. No one has such need of the assurance that every word of Divine truth carries its own immortal message, and can spring up and bear fruit and prosper, he knoweth not how. All seeds germinate best in the dark, and though now they lie buried out of sight, yet in God's due season even we shall reap, if we faint not and scant not our sowing. In a chapel at Colchester there stands a tablet to record how, in that place, sixty years ago, a young man met his Redeemer and found peace with God. Doubtless the building and the service and the sermon seemed dull and commonplace enough. Probably the preacher went home weary and despondent, all unaware of the lad named Charles Spurgeon who had been drinking in the word of life from his lips. Yet what incalculable spiritual harvests date back to that Sunday in the Colchester chapel! Just so little can a teacher guess what one mischievous scholar may grow into, for good or for evil. So little can a father or mother forecast the after-effect of the precept and example which, perchance, seem scorned and wasted now. Let us not grow weary. That sacred seed which we plant in weakness and dishonour, and water with our tears, God shall raise in His own power and glory at last.

The same great consoling truth fortifies our courage when we gaze farther afield and contemplate the fortunes and the future of that Church which Christ is building among men. Now, as in the beginning, clouds and darkness are round about it. Yet just here, where appearances are most deceitful, let us not be daunted or deceived. "Let us not commit the folly of quailing and being cowed," because clever, supercilious men of the world go about pronouncing that the Church dwindles and withers and waxes old and is ready to vanish away. "In the eyes of its contemporaries, Christianity has always appeared to be decaying." And some of its keenest critics, from Celsus to Renan, have found it not only decadent, but ridiculous and contemptible as well. Mockery is always a favourite weapon of unbelief. Our most confident adversaries still sit in the seat of the scornful. Towards such foes the Christian answer and attitude are simply Christ's, who, when He was reviled, reviled not again. "*Ausus vana contemnere*, was the word said of old of a great captain who saw through the emptiness of contempt and dared to make light of it." God is not mocked. Nay, the ancient Psalmist hints at a certain solemn scorn of scorn in the Divine nature. *He that sitteth in the heavens*

shall laugh at them: the Lord shall have them in derision. Let us make no mistake. The humble and the holy, the meek and the merciful, the peacemakers and the cross-bearers, the poor in spirit and the pure in heart, are not duped or deluded. The lives of the saints are not foolishness, nor the prayers of the faithful empty breath, nor the toil of the missionaries wasted, nor the blood of the martyrs shed in vain. *Shall not God avenge His own elect?* There are times when the most comforting of all truths is the certainty that there must be a Judgment Day.

No single metaphor can contain the whole Gospel. And this figure which expresses the principle of the spiritual harvest has no room for the deepest and surest ground of our confidence in the end. The law of blind cause and effect is not the only law which rules in heaven. There is another and a mightier law of spiritual reversal and retrieval. By the miracle of God's redemption we sinners can reap what Christ Himself has sown. Whatsoever the Lord soweth, that shall He also reap. In the harvest, which is the end of the world, He shall see of His travail, and shall be satisfied. Those texts which describe the wonder and glory of the Divine love and sacrifice, become so many prophecies

of its unspeakable recompense and victory. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." "He spared not His Son, but delivered Him up for us all." And God is not mocked. By His acts of redeeming grace, He has involved Himself in the spiritual destiny of His creatures. And so the Church can look up into His countenance and say in faith and hope unquenchable, *The Lord shall perfect that which concerneth me. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. Forsake not the work of Thine own hands.*

I SAT WHERE THEY SAT

IX

I SAT WHERE THEY SAT

A MODERN scholar has declared that the Book of Ezekiel finds fewer readers than any other part of the Bible ; and so far as the bulk of the book is concerned his judgment might be difficult to disprove. Yet amid those weird symbols and gorgeous visions no prophecy bears more vivid traces of its author's personality. In a peculiar sense Ezekiel is made part and parcel of his own message. He bears witness not merely by words, but by deeds. Even his common acts assume strange, dramatic meanings. The prophet himself becomes a sign and a wonder to his people. Is there anything in the Old Testament more moving than the picture of his bereavement? "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'Write thee the name of the day, even of this same day'" —it was the fatal day when the armies of Babylon closed round Jerusalem for the last

time, and on this same day Ezekiel is made the personification of grief too deep for tears—"'Son of man, behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep; forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead.' So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died." And so again, when Ezekiel is sent to the captives by the river of Chebar with a burden of yet darker doom, we feel how this awful prophet is still a son of man, with brooding memories and a passionate human heart. When he comes to the exiles he can speak nothing; he is overwhelmed. He can only take his place dumbly by their side: "I sat where they sat; and I remained there astonished among them seven days."

Often we narrow the idea of sympathy, as though it stood for a mere state of feeling. But sympathy is an act as well, an inward act of imagination and emotion. Before we can sympathize properly with any other human being, we must put ourselves in his place. We must, if not literally, at least imaginatively, sit where he sits, and see what he sees, and feel as he feels, a d then we may perchance begin to understand what help he needs and what lessons he can teach. In this sense, sympathy

is one prime qualification of a student. To get at the soul and secret of any great book we must, as it were, let the author himself read it to us. We must take our place by his side and watch him as he composed it, in palace chamber or prison cell. And then his book will become a living voice which speaks from the heart to the heart. It is a sense of this truth which lends such curious interest and value to the details about an author's life. And this, again, is one of the reasons which give zest to the endless attempts to trace the real authorship of anonymous works. After all, a great man's writings are often precious chiefly as part of himself. They become important in proportion as they help us to understand how such a man could hold such doctrines and champion such causes. His books reveal the place which he occupies in the history of the human spirit. Of course this connection between an author and his work is far more intimate in some cases than in others. The *Divina Commedia* is perhaps the supreme example of how personality can transfuse an immense spiritual epic, so that its whole idea and purpose, as well as its filling up and colouring, are determined by the peculiar experiences of the poet. "This loftiest of all poems is also the most individual"; and its endless forms of terror

and beauty can never be properly appreciated until we realize how the factions of Florence drove Dante into his bitter banishment.

In this sense, though assuredly not in this sense alone, sympathy is essential for students of the Scriptures. There are Christians who describe the Bible as an easy book. And it is true of the way of salvation that wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. But the Scriptures as a whole are not easy to understand. *The well is deep.* And it is melancholy to notice how few believers lay themselves out to gain an intelligent spiritual conception of God's Book in its diversity and its unity, so that they can grasp the special force and purport of each separate part. One main reason, for example, why we think the Hebrew prophets obscure is that we fail to enter into the intense national life amid which they moved and spoke. We must sit beside the captives by the river of Chebar before we can appreciate Jeremiah's lamentations and Ezekiel's rebukes. We must take our place in some upper room at Corinth or Philippi, in a world far remote from our own world of thought and action and ethics, before we can listen to one of St. Paul's epistles as it was first read in the primitive Church. The books belong to the present, indeed, as much as they did to the past, because

God's redeeming love cannot alter and man's imperious need remains the same. Therefore no Scripture is of any private interpretation. It is not for one age, but for all time. Yet to realize its force and freshness we can hardly take too much pains to put ourselves in the place of the men and women on whose ears it fell at the first.

So again sympathy is almost the chief requisite of a true teacher. He who aspires to be a great poet, said Macaulay, must first become a little child. He must take to pieces the whole web of his mind. He who aspires to be a true teacher must carry out this unweaving process among the knots and tangles of his own prejudices and conceits. He must get back into the age and the mind of his scholars, and look out at the world through their eyes and read the lesson with their understanding. This gift is peculiarly needed by those of us who teach religion to the young. No task is more sacred or more arduous. As our spirits are touched with the sense of its high issues, we shall never rest content with any form of sound words, however correctly recited. We must get behind those glib responses to learn what ideas the children really cherish about God and duty and heaven. We must sit down humbly side by side with them

in the seat of the simple, and we shall discover in our midst the unseen Teacher, drawing us all unto Himself. So again this sympathetic faculty is almost indispensable to a preacher. Part of his special duty is to project himself into his congregation. While he stands in the pulpit his heart must be among the pews, if he is to speak and pray according to the common need. And conversely, his people must try to put themselves into the place of their minister, if they are to realize his position, with its subtle perils and its lonely burdens. They must sometimes kneel where he kneels, before their fellowship can deepen into the communion of saints. Even in life's prosaic duties and relationships, would not this temper transform our social problems ? How differently the world would fare if capital were to sit where labour sits, and if workmen brought themselves to realize the liabilities of an employer. We should have fewer quarrels and strikes and harsh judgments and rankling grievances, if we had grace to put ourselves in the position of our opponents, even of the men whom we have most cause to dislike and despise.

For successful Christian service hardly any gift is more necessary than this power of imaginative sympathy. No man dare attempt such service, apart from a Divine call and the inward conse-

cration which answers and obeys it. Yet not even this vital equipment will save us from blundering and failure, so long as with all our zeal we ignore the facts of human nature and the conditions of modern life. The most ardent Christians can never serve effectively unless they will take pains to understand the people they try to help. The wisdom which cometh down from above is not afraid to stoop, until it can enter by intuition into other men's feelings and read their condition, and understand by instinct how to deal with their souls. Such an endowment as this depends partly on moral inheritance. But it can be cultivated by exercise. Thoughtful love grows wise by constant watching, and strong by patient self-denial. The heart that is at leisure from itself wins power to soothe and sympathize. When we covet earnestly the best gifts it is worth while to remember George Fox's wonderful prayer: "I have prayed to be baptized into a sense of all conditions, that I might be able to know the needs and feel the sorrows of all." There are men and women in these troubled days who possess no such serene convictions and celestial messages as were granted to the founder of the Society of Friends; yet they have begun at least to feel for all sorts and conditions of men. For them there remains no swifter solvent

of doubts, no surer road to realities, than to leave behind them their theories and their pride of position and their hoarded culture, and humbly and innocently to go out into the highways and hedges, and there to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep. Through such experiences it shall be shown them what they must do.

This quality of universal sympathy which we have been considering finds striking illustration in our most modern school of poetry. In his illuminating volume on Robert Browning, Mr. G. K. Chesterton has brought out one decisive peculiarity of *The Ring and the Book.* "It is the great epic of the age, because it is the expression of the belief, it might almost be said of the discovery, that no man ever lived upon this earth without possessing a point of view." Hitherto a poet had expressed what he himself conceived to be the truth about a tragedy, and had more or less pronounced judgment on the moral relations and moral value of his characters. But Browning makes an altogether new experiment. He gives us nine distinct versions of the same tragedy, each from an entirely fresh standpoint. As we read we are initiated into the inwardness of the characters involved, evil as well as good. We sit in a manner where they sit; we listen to the

best they can say for themselves, and we realize how they have come to be what they are. And in this way we are led up irresistibly to a right spiritual judgment at last. Browning insists on the justice of letting each person put his own case from his own point of view, however jaundiced and bloodshot it may be. But Browning never suffers us to fall into the deadly heresy that, as Madame de Staël said, "To know everything is to pardon everything." That fatal falsehood cuts the very nerve of moral distinctions; it makes saints and scoundrels, martyrs and persecutors, all equally pitiable and equally deluded. Browning's high ethical sanity knew that the nature of things is good, and that the dominion of goodness ruleth over all.

And thus, finally, it braces and purifies our imperfect sympathy when we recognize that this virtue, like every other, rests on the Divine Ideal and Exemplar. When God Himself stooped to visit and redeem His people in their captivity, He sat where they sat. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part in the same." Christ goes into partnership even with our common flesh and blood. He shares all the conditions of the human lot, shares them to the uttermost. Our humblest needs, our hardest struggles, our deepest ques-

tionings, our loneliest prayers, our sharpest sorrows, our blackest shames, our deadliest fears —Christ gathers them all into His bosom and takes them for His own. He was made flesh and blood for every man. He was made sin for every man. He tasted death for every man. For us and for our redemption He sat where we sit, and became even as we are— that we sinners may rise into His likeness, and may sit with Him on His throne at last.

GO NOT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

X

GO NOT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

We can hardly miss the original meaning and motive of this precept. Our Lord was in the act of dismissing His disciples that they might carry over hill and highway the good news of the Kingdom. Hitherto they had clung round Him in one company, which moved altogether if it moved at all. Now they must break up and disperse abroad and encounter those temptations which always beset the itinerant evangelist. Such a missionary, as he moves up and down the country, is peculiarly apt to develop a vagrant temper. He has to wander so much that he grows restless in his own soul. And here lies the stress of the Lord's warning. "Pilgrims," He seems to say, "you must needs be, for My sake and the Gospel's. But take heed lest you turn into mere vagrants. Carry a settled spirit in spite of your roving mission. Hold fast by every anchorage that presents itself, and in each port let your boat be moored and

not drifting hither and thither. *Into whatsoever house ye enter, be content with such things as they set before you. There abide and thence depart. Go not from house to house.*" Such a command in its literalness could only apply to the special need that called it forth. Yet it involves a deep principle of spiritual truth. The complete Christian temper must always be the reconciling of opposites, the harmony of contrasts, which nothing but paradox can describe. And the New Testament revels in paradoxes, whose contradictions are all resolved in the secret experience of the faithful. Only Christians can understand what it means to be unknown, yet well known; troubled, yet not distressed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; persecuted, yet not forsaken; having nothing, yet possessing all things. Only Christians can realize that they are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God. Only Christians can declare, "we have no continuing city," "we have no certain dwelling-place," and go on to testify in the same breath, "we who have believed do enter into rest." Christ's precept surely points to the settled, tranquil spirit which must characterise those disciples who nevertheless confess that they are pilgrims and strangers upon earth.

Far back in the dim grey dawn of history we

can perceive how civilization began, when nomad tribes of tent-dwellers learned to build themselves fixed habitations. The laws and the arts of life became possible as these pastoral peoples founded a fatherland, a city, and a state. One of the earliest human records describes how the primitive murderer was doomed to be a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth. Even then, men knew the preciousness and the sanctity of a settled home. The Bible indeed shows us one patriarchal family moving from the valley of the Euphrates to the valley of the Nile, and thence slowly back to the banks of the Jordan. But the migrations of Israel were always undertaken in view of a promised land to possess. The sons of Abraham were more than mere nomads. They marched with their goal in prospect. The father of the faithful had purchased a burying-place for his dead in that same soil which his children were afterwards to receive for an inheritance. And the Bible describes how they did receive it, and held it through more than a thousand chequered years, until for their sins they lost it again. To this day one race goes homeless and outcast among the nations, encamped in every land but domesticated in none; while imagination has conceived nothing more terrible than the figure of the wandering Jew.

GO NOT FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

History and instinct and experience agree that to be civilized means at least to be settled. The civic and domestic virtues cluster round a fixed home and familiar neighbours and the sense of local ties and rights and claims. No man can play his proper part in life so long as he roams hither and thither with no deep-rooted attachment to any one locality. So the tramp and the gipsy, at the bottom of society, correspond in essentials with the globe-trotter, who considers himself to be near the top. It is an ominous sign that those who boast that they are heirs of all the ages seem lapsing back into the nomad state and the nomad temper. Now that locomotion is made so safe and so easy and travelling becomes so cheap, multitudes of persons grow restless and take to wandering across the world. Some one has calculated that a successful American spends quite half of his time in hotels. And sober, conservative Englishmen shift their quarters far oftener than any civilized folk ever did before. In our great cities, middle-class people are continually moving from house to house and from suburb to suburb. The average term of an urban tenant is about three years. He is divorced from the freehold. He strikes no real roots into the soil of the parish in which he happens to be rated. It would be difficult to exaggerate the

portentous change which has come over England in this respect. How few men die now as the father of the present writer died, in the same street of a quiet little town in which he was born and had lived for three-quarters of a century. How few women marry now as the writer's grandmother married, from the village where ancestors of her name had been dwelling since Tudor times, and lay buried side by side in the village chancel. Such ancient, enduring ties as those must have had a strength of ghostly association, a spell of immemorial peace, which we can never regain, which we can scarcely even understand. But we do understand only too well the misery of modern restlessness, we do suffer from the tyrannous tendency which plucks at our roots until we groan like the mandrake in the fable when it is torn out of its native earth. People plead that there is no escaping these swift tides and currents of change. Who can fight against the inevitable conditions of his age and his country? But at least we can resist the fatal temper which these things breed—wherein lies their real moral danger. Even though we have to fold our tents like the Arabs, we can still, by God's grace, be redeemed from a vagrant and distracted heart.

Let us not appear thankless for our benefits.

The power to travel does often prove an incalculable boon. It can bring back lost health. It can ift us out of provincial narrowness. It can teach what no books have the skill to reveal. For most young men, and young women too, it may be wholesome to take their *Wanderjahr*, and to learn what the world is like outside their garden walls. Yet surely, when all is said, the best part of any journey is the coming back again. That man must be pitied who does not carry abroad a constant *Heimweh* in his heart. Mr. Bernard Shaw, indeed, pours contempt on the English home with "its hideous boredom," "its stagnant isolation." He denounces "this horrible domestic institution" which the modern clever Englishwoman regards with such loathing. But this kind of humour is too perverse (Mr. Shaw intends it to be) for ordinary people. We decline to argue, or even to be angry, about our own hearth-fires. We know so well where our blessings make their abode. God has ordained that our holiest memories and our dearest hopes shall all come back there, like the skylark to its nest—Wordsworth's skylark:

> Type of the wise, who soar but never roam,
> True to the kindred points of heaven and home.

The same principle may be illustrated in

familiar instances, where we recognize its truth at once. It underlies our social relationships. Christ seems to say in effect, "Go not from friend to friend." That very name implies something select and exclusive and enduring. Fashionable women drive round leaving cards on scores of acquaintances who will never ripen into anything closer or dearer. Which of us can reckon up many really intimate friends? One chief trial in life is to discover how few friendships exist which will stand the strain of an awkward-looking circumstance or a decently attested report; whereas real friendship is like "those ancient altars where the unhappy and even the guilty found a sure asylum." Moreover, fresh friends of any value are very hard to make after the age of forty. It is the old friendships, secure and genuine and firmly built, which, like the solid walls of bygone ages, need no repairs, and stand always ready for shelter or defence. Surely the days are evil with any man when he wearies of old friends, and holds himself aloof from their society. Let him search his heart diligently, and let him pray God to search it, and see whether the blame does not lie with himself—in some drying up of the springs of affection, in some betrayal of true fidelity.

Further, we may see the same principle

governing the common work of the world. To pass from profession to profession, to change from office to office, to be everything by turns and nothing long, is fatal to efficiency, and often more fatal still to character. That servant must be worse than unfortunate who can never stay in a situation ; and similarly, when a master and mistress complain that they cannot keep their servants, you know that it is not wholly or chiefly the servants' fault. From any standpoint it is ruinous to carry the restless, unstable temper into your daily occupation. Consider Him who was content to live on for thirty years in the same little country town, perhaps in the same cottage, who laboured through most of those years, working with His own hands, probably at one bench in the same workshop. The disciple is not above his Master ; but every one who is perfected shall be even as his Master in this strong, steadfast, patient spirit. No other spirit can equip a Christian for his apprenticeship in the art of doing good. Amid our modern " turmoil of confused passion, hesitating ideals, tentative virtues, and groping philanthropies," the Church itself grows busy with novel experiments in Christian service. Yet the man who really achieves success in that service is he who cleaves steadily to the bit of work he undertook at the

beginning, who has faith and patience to stick to his society, or his meeting, or his class, or even his solitary scholar. The spiritual effort which tells in the long run is just quiet, dauntless perseverance in that duty which so many years ago God laid on your heart. Go not from task to task. To drive a hard furrow straight through to the end remains the high calling and election of every man who sets hand to the plough.

The same principle forbids us to go wandering from preacher to preacher, from church to church. Of all degraded Christian types the sermon-hunter seems perhaps the lowest. One step higher is the religious tramp, who never stays more than a few months in any Church, treating it like a casual-ward. This gipsy spirit proves in the end as hostile to true holiness as to real usefulness. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God. So, on the other hand, our Lord's warning carries its message to ministers who grow restless for a change of sphere. We are told that short pastorates seem to be on the increase, and critics assure us that alike to the average preacher and to the average congregation this will prove a relief. Yet surely a faithful and patient man of God ought to discover his spiritual efficiency increasing year by year, as he dwells among his own people; a Christian teacher

should find that his influence multiplies at compound interest as he grows at home in the same district. At least this much is certain, that those whom Christ has gathered within one fold become knit together by noble and pathetic loyalties. And many a humble sanctuary glows with two inextinguishable lamps—the lamp of memory and the lamp of sacrifice. In one of our grim factory towns a workwoman was speaking fondly and proudly about the chapel where her mother had been brought up and all her mother's family were baptized, whose communion she herself had joined as a girl. After she married and lived in a newer suburb, her husband still walked back with her to that chapel twice a Sunday. And when, in course of years, the minister died and members moved away and the funds declined and the pews looked empty, "we agreed that it was our duty to stand by the old chapel, and we always have stood by it and we always will."

Even so, in deep and manifold experiences, the Lord fulfils His promise, and they that have believed do enter into rest, "a settled rest, while others go and come." Through all the chances and changes of this mortal life, the pilgrim of eternity carries a certain stamp of stillness and tranquillity—the grace which the Roman Church calls recollectedness, which is so characteristic of

the saints in the Society of Friends. Rooted and grounded in love, the believer is no more carried about by the winds of doctrine, but stablished and made perfect in the peace of God. Even when houses made with hands must one after another be abandoned, he can answer quietly, *Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place. I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* And surely one chief charm about the picture of heaven in the Bible is just this sense of permanence. There shall be no night there, and no winter, and no more sea. There shall be an end of mortal parting and storms and fluctuancy. Concerning each one who enters that City which hath foundations it is written, *He shall go no more out.* We shall never desire to depart from the Paradise of God. The old motto *Quis separabit?* might stand carved over the everlasting doorway : who shall make division henceforth between the Redeemer and the redeemed ?

Once within, within for evermore,
There the long beatitudes begin.
Left without are death and doubt and sin,
All man wrestled with and all he bore.
Blow the trumpet blast unheard before
Sing the unheard song of those who win,
Those who cast their crowns on Heaven's high floor
Once within.

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

XI

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE?

Simon Peter's question concerning the future reserved for his friend—*Lord, and what shall this man do?*—seems to have been prompted partly by affection, but partly also by curiosity. Both instincts belong to our essential human nature. When God created man, He breathed into him an inquiring spirit, and made him eager to explore the mysterious world which spreads round about him, and to search out whatever things are hidden and unknown. Urged by this great impulse, the captains of adventure forced their way through forest and wilderness, and steered by the stars across an uncharted sea. And every lad who is worth his salt still tingles at times with the ancient longing to wander in strange lands, that he may discover for himself what treasures they conceal. It is the same imperious desire which has gathered the facts of science and framed the systems of philosophy. As

Cudworth quaintly puts it: "The sons of Adam are now as busy as ever himself was, about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, shaking the boughs of it and scrambling for the fruit"; while people who pride themselves on being neither philosophical nor scientific, betray this elemental instinct of curiosity in double measure in regard to everything which is human or which deals with humanity. After all, to be alive means to take an interest in things, and every healthy person feels a vital interest in his neighbours. The secrets of nature are marvellous indeed, and beautiful as well; but nothing else on earth is half so fascinating and absorbing as men and women. In spite of ourselves we are members of one another. Abstract knowledge easily grows tiresome. Comparatively few people care how the fishes swim in the sea, or even how the planets move in the sky. But we cannot help caring intensely about our own countrymen and kinsfolk. The one inexhaustible subject, eternally interesting, is human nature, and therefore the proper study of mankind is man.

It is on this account that history possesses such unique and enduring attraction when once we read it in relation to life in the highways and hedges and in the streets and lanes of the city,

so that it recalls to us the individual need and striving and love and pity long since quiet in the grave. History, indeed, has been styled the most aristocratic of studies, yet it never becomes real until it touches the throbbing daily life of workshop and court and market-place. Thus, for example, there are two ways of regarding the magnificent discovery by Copernicus that the sun and not the earth is the centre of our system. We may consider that discovery as opening a new era in astronomical science. Or, on the other hand, we may be concerned with it on account of the amazing revolution which it wrought in the mental outlook of civilized men. When a scholar groups and marshals his materials so as to treat history from this latter point of view, he is often called a humanist. There have been men of vast learning, like Casaubon, who are remembered mainly for their sheer knowledge, rather than because of the humane way in which they employed that knowledge or its humanizing effect on their own minds. The opposite type and temper of scholarship found a noble representative in Dean Church, who was characteristically a Christian man of letters and yet cared for literature chiefly as the outcome and the expression of the spirit of man. Browning, again, has been described

as the most learned of English poets, but his multifarious knowledge interested him mainly because it could throw light upon the intricacies of human nature. He possessed the true humanist temper which prizes anything—even the report of a repulsive Italian murder trial—in so far as it exhibits those elemental powers and passions which make us men. To name only one recent book, Mr. Reaveley Glover's delightful *Studies in Virgil* is written by a humanist who understands that in order to judge poetry it is before all things necessary to enjoy it. He has the courage to illustrate Virgil's moral ideals by parallels borrowed from Browning; and he tells us frankly that the supremacy of the Æneid consists in this—that "it makes the heart beat."

In ways like these, by the help of history and biography and poetry and art, we may come to realize the many-coloured pageant of mortal existence. We widen our knowledge of the powers of human nature and the achievements of bygone generations. And from the things which man has done, we imagine what man shall yet do. Until, suddenly, the warning question arrests us: What are all these things to a Christian? How far do they concern him? Are they really helps to his inward

life? Do they not rather dazzle and distract the soul? When we gaze on mankind as a spectacle to gratify our eclectic curiosity, can we at the same time be cherishing a real compassion for the sins and miseries of the world? Is not this temper of the humanist alien from the mind of Jesus Christ?

To attempt an answer to such questions—even a partial and imperfect answer—would far outrun our scope and space. It must suffice to indicate, in words of a far-sighted teacher, the line along which the Christian answer may be found. To begin with, we dare not forget that human life itself is only a fragment. "Be this world what it may, the only true view of it is one which makes its greatness subordinate to that greater world in which it is to be swallowed up, and of which the New Testament is the perpetual witness." Above all, we who are Christ's disciples "have an example and ideal of love and sacrifice, to which it is simply impossible to make anything in this world a parallel." He who claims the first place in each man's heart has attracted and satisfied the eager scrutiny of anxious, imperfect generations. "Each age has recognized with boundless sympathy and devotion what it missed in the world, and has found in Him what it wanted. Each age has

caught in His lineaments what most touched and swayed its heart. And as generations go on and unfold themselves, they still find that character answering to their best thoughts and hopes; they still find in Him what their predecessors had not seen or cared for; they bow down to Him as their inimitable pattern, and draw comfort from a model plain enough and universal enough to be the Master, as of rich and poor, so of the first century and the last." Christian experience in every age ratifies His claim that we should disentangle our allegiance from other objects and interests in order that we may concentrate it upon Christ Himself.

Man is so created that he must needs look before as well as after. Our most awful human curiosity has always longed to lift that strange veil which shrouds the future. What father and mother would not fain cast a horoscope over their little child's cradle? "Lord," we cry, "what shall this lad do?" This was the irrepressible craving which drove men in old time to question oracles and watch for omens. The same craving leads men still to consult fortune-tellers and palmists, or to listen wistfully for some whisper from the irrevocable dead. They strive if by any means they may unlock the dark door and discover the secret which God keeps for Himself

alone. Against all curious prying and peering into the future our Lord uttered His condemnation when He said: *Take no anxious thought for the morrow.* Sufficient unto the day is the duty thereof; sufficient also the grace for that duty. We may not sit brooding and foreboding over things to come. Ours is a more practical office and a simpler task. We do not know, we can never so much as guess, what things shall befall ourselves, or befall those we love, according to the will of God. But what is that to us? None of these possibilities may turn us aside from the one path in life which is sure and certain, the changeless track marked out for His disciples by the print of Christ's wounded feet.

No other answer is vouchsafed to some of our theological problems. That is a noble curiosity which constrains us to ponder such deep questions and meditate on the chief concerns of man. Yet when we begin to ask: "Lord, what shall the heathen do, who never heard Thy Gospel?" "Lord, what shall Thy Church do, before the end comes?"—we learn that none of these speculations, solemn and absorbing as they are, must be suffered to distract us from simple-hearted, daily devotion to our Lord. Again, quite apart from vague speculations, there are mysterious, heart-breaking facts in experience for which we

find no explanation. Walk through the wards of a hospital or an asylum, look at the cureless cripples and imbeciles, and the question rises up unbidden, irresistible: "Lord, what shall these men do, and why hast Thou made them thus?" But again the self-same answer warns us that we are too dull to grasp the purpose of that Wisdom whose tender mercies are over all His works in all places of His dominion. It is ours to follow Christ in ministering to the very sufferers whom we must needs commit humbly and blindly to His holy and acceptable and perfect Will. We follow Him most closely when we spend ourselves in trying to lighten, even a little, that awful weight of sadness which for multitudes of human beings is life's product and sum.

Curiosity becomes perilous, not because it is in itself evil or irreverent, but because it is so apt to dissipate the soul. Our Lord will have nothing to distract us from simple, personal faith in His own Person. To our subtle doubts and curious fears and eager questionings, He has one reply: *What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.* The stress falls on the last word. He says in effect: "I am the Answer—to all the questions men can ask." And as we do follow Him faithfully, we discover at last the key to every problem and the clue to every mystery in Christ Himself.

He is Himself God's supreme Answer to the enigma of human life—the reward of every labour, the justification of every sorrow, the compensation for every sacrifice, the satisfaction of every desire. There are some, indeed, greatly daring, who do not shrink to ask concerning Christ Himself: "What shall this Man do, in the end?" Times and seasons come in our own experience when love waxes feeble and lamps burn low, when we hear that horrible freezing whisper: "What if our faith prove only a Divine delusion, nothing but a splendid mistake after all? What if, in the life of the world to come, we Christians find that we have been deceived, and that Jesus Christ Himself is there in a different station and position from what we believe and preach?" Let us have faith to answer in the words of Serenus de Cressy to John Inglesant: "What is that to us? To those who know Him, as we know Him—better be wrong with Jesus Christ, than right with His enemies; better Jesus Christ beaten and betrayed and defeated than all the world beside triumphing and crowned." At the last, when we end this life in which we are able to give back to Him so little of His love, some of us shall be most of all thankful for this—that as we have followed so imperfectly His blessed footsteps, He has gone before us, still the self-

same Christ of whom the Gospel tells us—poor and forsaken and despised and persecuted and laughed to scorn. Part of our joy in heaven itself will be the joy of those who have not seen and yet have trusted Him—ignorantly, helplessly, utterly trusted Him with their all.

THOU GAVEST ME NO KISS

XII

THOU GAVEST ME NO KISS

THE Son of Man, who came eating and drinking, would go to be a guest with a Pharisee just as readily and graciously as with a publican. But Christ was sometimes entertained from strange motives, and in the Gospel we discover one Pharisee who opened his doors to the Lord in the spirit of a superior person. It may have been curiosity which prompted his invitation; but, at any rate, he neglected to welcome his Visitor with the ordinary forms of Eastern hospitality. It appears that Simon the Pharisee considered the Prophet of Nazareth to be so far beneath him in social position that He need not be treated like an equal. The evangelist shows us how our Lord recognized this deliberate rudeness, and also took occasion to rebuke it with perfect gentleness and dignity. Coventry Patmore was right when he said that none of the fine arts is so fine as the art of manners, and

of them all it is probably the only one which is cultivated in the next world as well as in this. Genuine courtesy exists as a sacrament of fine feeling: it issues out of the abundance of the heart. Rising above restraints and conventions, "this primary art of good manners imitates nothing but God."

Simon the Pharisee behaved like a churl to his Guest, because he was guilty of what is called in the Bible respect of persons. That form of spiritual perversion is still miserably familiar. Respect of persons means that we regard and value men and women according to their outward circumstances and position. Our estimate is based on the accidents of existence instead of the essentials. We look at them with the eyes of Mr. Worldly-Wiseman; we never ask ourselves how they appear in the sight of God. Now to measure our fellow-men by this false standard always fosters a certain contempt and condescension towards those whom we consider beneath us; while on the other hand it breeds servility and self-seeking in our attitude towards those whom we feel to be above us. In one passage the New Testament flames out against the sinners who "show respect of persons for the sake of advantage." And we recognize the hateful fruits of this same spirit in modern

society. The snob we have always with us. Fawning and flattery are still horribly common, and they are practised, as a rule, for the mean object of winning patronage and favour and securing some personal gain from influential people. Even ecclesiastics and philanthropists grow obsequious in the company of a millionaire, because they think he can do so much for the good cause which they have at heart. There are still many imitators of those primitive disciples whom St. James condemned because they greeted a fashionable visitor with effusion, while they turned disdainfully from some poverty-stricken stranger who chanced to enter their assembly by the rich man's side. The apostle rebuked them quite as sternly for cringing to the one as for despising the other. Both forms of snobbishness are equally alien to the mind of Christ.

In the fulness of time, when God visited and redeemed His people, He proved Himself once for all to be no respecter of persons. The Incarnation means that Christ has made Himself one with that elemental human nature which constitutes the manhood of man. He became partaker of our common flesh and blood. He assumed not the mere accidents of our being, but its essential reality. And so He chose to

share that lot on earth which is the most catholic in its experiences. Christians can never forget that His hands which healed the sick and raised the dead, the hands which He spread out on the Cross to embrace a gainsaying world, had been roughened by daily labour. In the sweat of His brow He ate His bread. His enemies asked scornfully, *Is not this the carpenter?* But He called Himself with inexhaustible significance the Son of Man. Moreover, in our Lord's own estimate of mankind there was no respect of persons. It never occurred to Him that outward distinctions of money or rank or race could make the smallest difference to a man's real status, or affect his value in the sight of God. Must we not confess also that He attached no more importance to learning in itself than to riches? For knowledge, after all, is a kind of intellectual wealth, and is beset with corresponding temptations. When we look down upon simple-minded, unlettered disciples merely because they lack culture and education, we are doing despite to Jesus Christ.

Indeed, as we ponder the mystery of faith, which has for its sign a crucifix and for its legend *Sic Deus dilexit mundum*, we begin to understand how deep at the heart of the Gospel

lies the levelling doctrine, "There is no difference." In a world of inequality the Gospel appeals to that image of God which is the same in all men, and offers that Divine mercy which Pharisees need no less and no more than publicans. The common salvation has one claim and one commandment for the lofty and for the lowly. The great central act of Christian worship ignores our human differences, and gathers men of every rank and race side by side at the Supper of the Lord. It is simple matter of history, says Professor Gwatkin, that the Communion service has been by far the most powerful of the influences which have tended to level class prejudices and to unite men as members of one body. Early civilization was founded on the distinctions which sever men and keep them apart. The so-called Greek democracies were no better than oligarchies among troops of slaves. Yet we can see in the early Church how, though slavery was not abolished, the sting of it was drawn when the slave was fully recognized as in spiritual things his master's equal. This comes out emphatically in the Acts of the Martyrs. "No thought ever seemed to cross Perpetua's mind that their good companion Felicitas is any worse for being a slave; and in the last scene, where the matron and the slave are

standing hand in hand to meet the shock of death, the deepest prejudice of the ancient world is not simply overcome, but utterly forgotten." Even when the spiritual equality proclaimed by the Eucharist became obscured in the Mass, the Church was still for a thousand years the one democratic Society, where the son of a serf might become a bishop and a poor scholar might find his way to St. Peter's chair. The Reformation reaffirmed the liberty and equality of Christian men, but its political influence was at first in the other direction. A great decisive blow was struck when the American colonies became a republic—the first real republic in history, with every trace of privilege among white men rooted out. And through all the changes which have gradually followed in civilized nations there has run "a deepening sense of the worth and dignity of man as man, and of his right and duty to make himself the best man he can."

Nevertheless, democracy was born at Bethlehem —not, as Carlyle declared, at Bunker's Hill. And the spiritual movement towards democracy is very far indeed from complete. Take one elementary human right which the Hebrew prophets proclaimed—the right of each individual man to obtain equal justice. After all these centuries England to-day is almost the only

country on earth where a court of justice knows no respect of persons, where the foreigner as a matter of course can obtain fair play against the native-born. And even our British laws and institutions are still clogged with relics of feudal privilege; while the basest kind of class-feeling is that peculiarly modern kind, which begins in the passion for material wealth and culminates in grovelling admiration for plutocrats.

Those profound and vital distinctions between men which Christ did recognize all turn upon the relation of their spirits to God. He insisted, for instance, on the measureless difference between the proud and the humble, between the cynic and the tender-hearted, between the hypocrite and the sincere, between the hearers and the doers of His Word, between the sheep and the goats before His judgment-seat. To-day, as in ancient time, we who are Christ's have to bear steadfast, unwavering witness to these everlasting distinctions, as opposed to distinctions which are formal and shallow and false. When Ambrose dared to shut the gates of his church against Theodosius, because the Emperor's raiment was red with massacre, men caught a glimpse of the overwhelming truth that there is no respect of persons with God. Few arguments for faith are so convincing as the life of a

Christian who quietly acts on the supernatural assumption that in Christ Jesus there is neither learned nor ignorant, neither labourer nor capitalist—a Christian who seriously believes that, after all, the saints and not the millionaires shall judge the world.

To enter into such victorious faith, how many of us must repent and be converted and become as little children. For there is no respect of persons with children. Our worldly selfish examples may corrupt them into snobbishness; but by the grace of God they are all born democrats to begin with. And men of genius have sometimes shown themselves to be as little children in this same happy instinct. It was said of Sir Walter Scott: "He speaks to every man as if they were blood-relations." Now the catholic faith is this—that every man is Christ's blood-relation. And the true catholic spirit can lift a Christian above caste prejudices and learned conceits and social distinctions. The Gospel never tells us, indeed, that all men—or all Christians—are alike, or are equally gifted or equally admirable. But it does teach us to contemplate our fellow-creatures *sub specie æternitatis*, in the light of the world to come. As we hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, in naked sincerity we shall

discern something of His awful glory in every human being whom He has died to redeem. We shall discover underneath all our divisions the Divine ground of human unity. The things which set us asunder will dwindle and vanish away in that reconciling Love which gathers together into one all the children of God that are scattered abroad.

KEPT PEACEFUL IN THE MIDST OF STRIFE

XIII

KEPT PEACEFUL IN THE MIDST OF STRIFE

We live and move and have our being in a world of conflict, where all animate things are struggling for existence. To the eye of a naturalist this goodly frame the earth appears as one wide field of battle, where all creatures contend and compete with each other in order that they may keep themselves and their offspring alive. Science, no less than Scripture, declares that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and the spectacle, when once we grasp it, becomes assuredly "a vision to dizzy and appal." Each of us is born into this bewildering, universal conflict, in which he finds himself implicated and compelled to take part. Civilization, in many respects, has only intensified competition. In our modern industrial society men struggle more feverishly than ever for the prizes of success, and take more anxious

thought than ever about the grim risks of failure. No doubt the strenuous life, which Mr. Roosevelt so splendidly exemplifies and preaches with such conviction as the ideal of young America, has immense fascinations and rewards of its own. Nevertheless it can scarcely be said to breed the beatitude of peacefulness ; nor is it written, " We who are strenuous do enter into rest." Keble came closer to the New Testament when he wrote, " The world is for excitement, the Gospel for soothing." The first gift which Christ holds out to men is rest for the heavy-laden. His last bequest to His disciples was His own unbroken peace. Beyond the happy calm which settles on a forgiven soul lies the deeper tranquillity of a will surrendered and united to the will of God. There was a time when the condition of each anxious penitent inquirer used to be tested by this question : " Have you found peace ? " And the final benediction of the saints is described as their inheritance in the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Nevertheless there is a most real and vivid sense in which the Christian life must be constantly strenuous, alike in spirit and in action. Christ Himself calls us to daily, tireless, truceless battle with our own selfishness. He enlists us

in the eternal war which He wages upon all injustice and oppression and superstition. He rallies us to a crusade against the cruelty and corruption which are in the world. And for a believer there is no escape from this obligation and no discharge from this warfare, until the very end. Even good men have often been tempted to retreat from the stress and burden of Christian conflict. When Farel wrote urging Calvin to settle at Geneva, he used great plainness of speech: "I perceive what it is, you are wrapt up in a selfish love of leisure and books. May God's curse rest upon these studies, if you now refuse your aid to His Church in her time of need." But we dare not purchase quietness either by apathy or by isolation. In every age there is found a class of select and superior persons who withdraw disdainfully from "the madding crowd's ignoble strife." They build a wall around their own garden of culture, where they sit secluded from the tumult and the pain of common, struggling humanity. The dreadful warning spoken to Paracelsus comes true in their case: *There are strange punishments for such.* Again we find other noble spirits who covet not ease and self-indulgence, but, above all things, inward peace. And in quest of this single blessing they have literally renounced the world.

They have turned their backs on friends and home and freedom, and have taken refuge in an anchorite's cave or a monk's cell in their search for tranquillity. Yet such retreats and renunciations serve only to evade, and not to solve, the problem. Christian peace was never meant to be a cloistered and fugitive virtue. It is that grace which can garrison a believer's soul, even while he is carried each day right into the vortex of commerce and competition. Nay, we are told that in the very centre of the wildest cyclone there exists a space of absolute stillness "where all the winds are laid." It is a parable of the central calm which reigns at the heart of our earthly struggles and confusions. As we dwell in the secret of God's will, we feel how infinite around us floats the eternal peace that is predestinated to conquer all storms.

The Gospels contain one supreme picture of peace in the midst of strife. When His disciples were wrangling with one another which of them should be greatest, the Lord took a child and set him in their midst. Christ and the child, imperturbably at home together, were a living sign that rivalries and jealousies and ambitions are not of the kingdom of heaven. The servant of the Lord must not strive. Even in opposing iniquity he must himself be free from the base, envious,

rancorous spirit which he opposes. When he rebukes revilers and slanderers it must be without reviling and exasperation and bitterness. When he denounces injustice he must be scrupulously just and charitable. Through the heat and strain of battle he must carry Christ's meekness and quietness in his breast. The Church's warfare can only win its triumph in this gentle, tranquil, irresistible way. In the words of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, "We do not always resist the devil when we bid defiance to him, or when we declaim most zealously against him. As God's kingdom is set up, so the devil's kingdom may be pulled down, without the noise of axes and hammers. We may then attain to the greatest achievements against the gates of hell and death, when we most of all possess our own souls in patience, and collect our minds into the most peaceful, composed, and united temper."

This paradox of the serenity of the spiritual combatant has been illustrated in sacred art. The great painters understand how to suggest the calmness of God's angels, those ministers of His that do His pleasure. Milton indeed can write of Michael the Archangel, "with hostile brow and visage all inflamed." Yet the true type and pattern of Christian warfare is Michael as Perugino painted him, "with his triple crest of

traceless plume unshaken in heaven, his hand fallen on his crossletted sword, the truth girdle binding his undinted armour; God has put his power upon him, resistless radiance is in his limbs, no lines are there of earthly strength, no trace on the divine features of earthly anger; trustful and thoughtful, fearless, but full of love, incapable except of the repose of eternal conquest, filled like a cloud with the victor light, the dust of principalities and powers beneath his feet, the murmur of hell against him, heard by his spiritual ear like the winding of a shell on the far-off seashore."

For the final secret of peace in the midst of moral strife is an implicit confidence that the issue is certain, because the battle is not ours, but God's. Only one message can speak to the heart of Jerusalem—the message that her warfare is accomplished. He who said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation," said also, "In Me ye shall have peace . . . I have overcome the world." And our pledge of tranquillity when all else seems shaken, our one antidote to all disquietude and dismay, is contained in the death-cry of the Son of God, "It is finished." Even as He died, He beheld the powers of darkness vanquished and trampled underfoot. It *was* finished. We have only to gather up the fruits of His eternal victory.

THE SACRAMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

XIV

THE SACRAMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

We might quote ample authority for using the word sacrament with a certain latitude of application. To St. Augustine it meant almost any outward sign of spiritual truth. When Hugh of St. Victor in the twelfth century wrote his treatise *De Sacramentis Fidei*, he enumerated no fewer than thirty. The Reformers went back to the New Testament, and found only two sacraments ordained by Christ as "effectual signs of grace and God's good-will." During the last hundred years the term has been again expanded, until with some writers it applies to any and every emblem of the divine. Wordsworth, and the mystics who have drunk at the same fountain as Wordsworth, can regard all visible things as only the shadow of things unseen and eternal. For them "a snowdrop is part of the Sermon on the Mount." Nature

herself constitutes one vast symbol through which God reveals and communicates Himself to the purified soul. So Mrs. Browning describes a Sabbath sunrise at sea:

> Here no earth profaned the sun:
> Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
> The sacrament of morning.

In such ecstasy of emotion the sign dissolves into the thing signified, forms and rites are forgotten and left behind. At the opposite pole to this mystical rapture which transcends all symbols, we come into collision with the rigid ecclesiastical theory which insists upon sacraments as the sole covenanted channels whereby God's grace reaches a human soul. We will not here discuss a doctrine which logically would degrade the religion of Christ into sheer magic. But between these two extreme positions we may discover more than one profound and practical application of a much-abused term.

Goethe expressed the opinion that Protestant Christians have too few sacraments, and Goethe sometimes showed the insight of genius in regard to matters about which he knew comparatively little. In the history of the Church it is significant that one rite has narrowly escaped becoming a formal sacrament. The Fourth Gospel omits

any account of the institution of the Eucharist, but describes in vivid detail how our Lord on that same night in which He was betrayed washed the feet of His disciples, that He might teach them by a solemn, symbolic example how they must serve one another in humility and love. We can hardly wonder that some Christians should have taken this feet-washing to be a sacramental act, which Christ meant them to repeat. In Holland the Mennonite Baptists used to practise feet-washing regularly in their assemblies for worship. Through long centuries the kings and prelates of Christendom kept up a similar rite. And each year when Maundy Thursday comes round, the Pope and the Emperor of Austria still go through the form of publicly washing the feet of twelve poor men—as an imitation, which seems almost a parody, of Jesus Christ. Yet even such a survival, half-grotesque to modern eyes, embalms a deep truth. Our Christian service of others can only be rendered aright when it is done sacramentally, when it becomes an effectual means and channel of God's grace to our own souls, as well as to the souls of those whom we seek to help and bless.

Perhaps there never was a generation when Christians were so active and eager in trying to do good. Indeed, among many earnest people,

what they call religious work or social service begins to assume something like the importance which belonged to sacraments in the mediæval Church. At any rate, the analogy carries with it a warning. For those same perils which cling round the sacramental system re-appear under fresh disguises to beset our earnest evangelicals and zealous civic reformers. A modern philanthropist is tempted to assume the old *opus operatum* fallacy—tempted to believe that certain outward acts or institutions somehow convey virtue of themselves, irrespective of the spirit which informs and controls them. So, again, in these days we have developed a machinery of revivalism as well as an organization of charity. We forget that good men may employ the formulas of the inquiry-room just as glibly as other good men recite the phrases of the missal; pious women may scatter tracts just as mechanically and promiscuously as a priest sprinkles holy water. To speak of Christian service as a sacrament implies first of all that we must guard it against those subtle perversions and corruptions to which a sacrament is peculiarly exposed. The best of our good works are worthless apart from God's grace working in them and through them. All our methods and activities must remain idle, empty,

impotent things, unless they be instinct with the Spirit of Christ.

The conventional doctrine of sacraments is refuted by a conception of the Christian Church and ministry which is far loftier and more august. When ecclesiastics claim to exercise sacerdotal functions and powers, they only narrow and distort a universal truth—the truth that every believer has an awful and sacred priestly office. It is his high function to become a daily mediator and communicator of the Eternal Love, to bring God near to men and men near to God. Each redeemed soul, each redeemed society, is ordained to be a witness and an instrument of redemption. And so it follows that our Christian service resembles a sacrament in this—that its methods and forms are of small moment compared with the grace it conveys. Now grace cannot be measured in terms of activity. When we hear some busy Christian extolled for doing as much work as two ordinary people, we remind ourselves that in the service of Christ quantity and quality are things unlike and incommensurable. It was said concerning a certain holy woman that she did nothing but what was done by everybody else, but that she did all things as no one else did them. Even the drudgery of a common-

place lot can be penetrated by the powers of the world to come. We read of Fra Angelico that whenever he had to paint a Crucifixion, he painted it on his knees, with the tears running down his cheeks. And one golden saying of Fra Angelico's is recorded concerning Christian service: "He who would do the work of Christ must dwell continually with Him." In that companionship we begin to catch the meaning of our Lord's own wonderful words: *For their sakes, I sanctify Myself.* Nothing that we can ever do for others is comparable with what we can be to them. The greatest work a Christian does on earth is just to have been, in very deed and truth, a Christian.

From primitive times the Lord's Supper has received the characteristic name of Eucharist. That is to say, it has been celebrated as a feast of thankfulness and joy. And our Christian service must attain this jubilant sacramental note. Unless we serve eucharistically we can never serve effectually. Self-denial for the sake of the disinherited ought to become not merely a painstaking act of duty, but an eager, joyful act of devotion, rendered in the spirit of wonder, love, and praise that we possess any spikenard worthy to be spilt at our Lord's feet. Not a few

modern Christians seem to have lost the sunny temper which the old monks named "hilaritas." We are sadly cumbered about our serving. Coventry Patmore has reminded us of the saints "who went about their greatest tasks like noble boys at play." What a contrast to our low-thoughted care, our fretful fussing over details, our anxiety about results! How many Christian duties sink into a barrenness and a bondage because we have not faith enough to do them eucharistically—with the glee and gratitude of child-like hearts which are redeemed from taking thought for the morrow by Him who is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.

Many years ago, at a Gaelic communion service in the island of Iona, a venerable minister let fall a sentence which some of his hearers never forgot: "The Church," he said, "is the Lord's Supper to the world." In their own lives and characters the whole fellowship of the faithful must show forth the Lord's death and make it real before the eyes of men. Theologians have disputed in what sense the Communion may be called a sacrifice, how far it can reflect or reproduce the one Oblation. No theologian, however, will contradict the English Prayer-book when it teaches each communicant to say: "Here we offer and present ourselves, O Lord,

our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee." And in our Christian service of others, we have a spiritual altar for the offering up of ourselves. That service will possess small value or virtue so long as we treat it like a work of supererogation, to be done with the remnant of our energy and in odd fragments of our time. It must cost us our very best. Wherever the Cross pierces deeply enough, men and women are still constrained to yield themselves to the Crucified in simple, sober earnest, in order that they may spend and be spent in the service of His little ones and His prisoners and His poor. That service becomes a sacrament indeed, in so far as it shows forth on earth some faint image of Love's unspeakable Sacrifice, which is eternal in the heavens.

St. Paul warned the Corinthians against the deadly peril of those persons at the Communion who eat and drink judgment to themselves, "not discerning the Lord's body." Whatever else that phrase may include, it surely points to the sin of refusing to recognize Christ's mystical Body, of denying our brotherhood with the humblest for whom He has died. And in the sacrament of service we shall be unworthy partakers if we fail to discern the Lord's Body, if we will not

joyfully recognize our fellow-servants and loyally join hands with them in their labour of love. Our spiritual communion leaves no place for the individualism which sets any soul aloof and apart from the one Body. Nay, rather, Christ's disciples must discern Him in the meanest outcast whom they seek to serve for His sake. To see "the eyes of Christ in the eyes of the crossing-sweeper" is to think of the whole race of men with awful reverence and hope. Perhaps no theological question has engendered such bitter controversy as the doctrine of the Real Presence. The great Reformers denied indeed that Christ is present at the Eucharist in the carnal sense taught by Roman superstition. But they certainly never kept that feast as "the picturesque memorial of an absent Lord." They held, as we hold, that in this collective action of the gathered Church, Christ still reveals His presence to His faithful disciples and communicates His very self to their souls. And the same experience repeats itself and is verified anew in the sacrament of Christian service. Whenever we go out into the highways and hedges, innocently, as knowing nothing, and there rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep, we shall regain that vanished Presence whom priest and pyx can never localize. Within our

inmost hearts Christ will manifest Himself as the one Reality—more real than home and friends, than earth and sky and stars—closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.

THE MEASURE OF A MAN, AND OF AN ANGEL

XV

THE MEASURE OF A MAN, AND OF AN ANGEL

THE dimensions of the New Jerusalem are set down in the Apocalypse with curiously vivid realism, as though the prophet desired to certify us that the spiritual city which he saw in his vision was no phantom, but a most concrete and credible reality. It seems almost as if he remembered the ancient word: *Walk about Zion; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces.* His heavenly companion even carries a golden reed to measure the city, and registers how high its battlements rise in units of human reckoning. And then the seer pauses for a moment, as though it crosses his thought that there are standards celestial and standards terrestial. Some man will say, How can our earthly cubits form a calculus for that which knows not the gauge of time nor wears the manacles of space? So the prophet adds a

brief parenthesis, to resolve our doubt, lest we should suppose such reckoning a mere illusion: *according to the measure of a man*, he says, *that is of an angel.*

This reading of the passage suggests a difficulty which from the nature of the case always lies at the threshold of religion. Although we are denizens of two worlds, we have no skill to realize the world of spirit apart from the aid of the world of flesh. As often as we try to think about the Divine and the Everlasting, we find ourselves constrained to use images and ideas which properly belong to this temporal and material order. We can only picture the heavenly mansions by means of colours and shapes taken from our earthly prison-house. To make a survey of the New Jerusalem we must needs borrow the cubits and the arithmetic of Old Jewry. We cannot help ourselves; there is no other way. When we ask, wistfully, What is the life to come? no answer is possible except an answer expressed in terms and values of the life that now is. Nay, when we ponder in reverence what is the essential character of God Himself, we can only conceive Him and describe Him by the help of those moral qualities which we recognize, however imperfectly, in the men and

women alive here in the world by our side. When, by an act of faith, we confess that God is good, we are assuming in our confession that there is really only one kind of goodness. We imply that goodness in heaven belongs to the same category as goodness on earth. We affirm that God's goodness is like that which we have felt to be good in the best people we have ever known—like that, only unspeakably better—the same ethical quality, but raised to infinite perfection.

If such assumptions and affirmations be baseless, then it seems difficult to avoid the conclusion that we must simply give up trying to think or to speak about God at all. Even if He existed, He must utterly transcend human knowledge. If we were to use His Name, we ought, in common sincerity, to enclose it within quotation marks. For that Name would be only a mask for our hopeless ignorance about the nature of things as they really are. Some able and acute Christian thinkers, indeed, have argued otherwise. They have maintained the thesis that while the Divine essence must always remain inscrutable, the Absolute and Infinite Being has been pleased to reveal Himself—or rather, not Himself, but a finite type of Himself, more or less different from the

reality—how different no one can dare to say. Against this doctrine which he conceived to be taught by Mansel's Bampton Lectures, F. D. Maurice protested with characteristic ardour. He vehemently denied that the Christian revelation may be considered as merely the best working hypothesis which we are able to attain of the character and purposes of God. He passionately maintained that we possess positive faculties for recognizing the Perfect Being who manifests Himself to our conscience and reason and heart. Though we know God only partially, yet what we do know is real and direct knowledge, and "carries with it a certainty that the inexhaustible depths still unexplored will only deepen instead of falsifying the knowledge we have gained."

Under varied forms and disguises this dispute is of ancient standing. It generally involves a confused, metaphysical conflict about the meaning or no-meaning to be attached to such a term as "infinite." Every mathematician knows that infinity is a treacherous and elusive symbol. Speaking as a poet, Coventry Patmore boldly maintained that "God Himself is most falsely described as infinite. God is the synthesis (as Proclus declared) of 'Infinite' and 'Boundary,' and is excellently intelligible,

though for ever unutterable by those who love Him." And apart from metaphysics, which they secretly mistrust, most plain Christian men will unite in that last confession of experience. Theology is a true science, because a true knowledge of God, however imperfect in degree, is possible to the children of men. The Bible, from one end to the other, is always affirming that though we can only know God in part, yet we do know that part securely; we are not beguiled and deluded by a vain dream. The Bible admits with entire frankness the limitations of mortal thought and language; but it declares that, in spite of these, men can still rise to a genuine knowledge of God, a knowledge which is not perfect, indeed, but true and practical and sufficient and certain, because it corresponds with the unseen and absolute Reality. And so the Bible throughout speaks simply and artlessly and naturally about things heavenly and Divine, taking for granted that the measure of a man is the measure of an angel.

Surely nothing less than this is involved in the very idea of a revelation. The astronomer stands perforce on the earth, and borrows the diameter of the earth's orbit for his base line to measure the sky. Again, he sifts with his

prism a ray of light from the farthest nebula, and proves that the same elements are blazing there at the edge of creation as exist on our tiny planet. For the measure of a man is also the measure of the morning star. This correspondence between things celestial and things terrestial is no mere accident. It teaches us that revelation would not be possible if there were not something in us to which it can appeal and from which it can evoke response.

> Held our eyes no sunny sheen,
> How could God's own light be seen?
> Dwelt no power divine within us,
> How could God's divineness win us?

The Incarnation does at least postulate that something, nay, much, exists in common between humanity and Deity. Human nature must have been made originally in God's moral and spiritual image, or it could never have been assumed by God's Son. That word, "He taketh not hold of angels, but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham," implies that the measure of a man is in some sense also the measure of the Eternal too. Through the thunder comes a Voice speaking in articulate human syllables, and under the darkness beats a Heart akin to our human hearts.

We dare never forget, however, that each earthly standard remains less than perfect. The primitive units of measurement betray their origin by their very names. Words like a foot, an ell, a cubit, show that these were at first rough, arbitrary measures, taken from man's body. In later and more scientific days various "natural" standards of length have been proposed—such as the earth's circumference at a certain latitude, or the wave-length of a particular ray of light, or the length of a pendulum beating seconds at a certain level. Yet even then the difficulty remains to determine an exact and permanent unit for practical use. Any such unit must be ultimately manufactured for purposes of reference, and so itself becomes approximate because artificially defined. Thus, in English statute measure a yard is the distance between the centres of two gold studs, sunk in a bronze bar, which is kept at the Standards' Office at Westminster, and all other English measures of length are checked and tested with final reference to this. Moreover, it is the fate of earthly measures and weights that they grow worn or warped or perverted. Too often we hear of salesmen who are fined for using a rod or a mass which falls short of the truth. Now the proverb that "a false balance is an abomination unto the Lord," while it applies

to trade, is certainly not less true in faith and morals. When we deliberately adopt the dialect of the cynic or the pessimist or the sensual man of the world, we are debasing the current ethical standards; we are popularizing the measuring reed of Satan. As Augustine has said, "There is more than one way by which men pay homage to the fallen angels." Our commonest temptation, however, is to sin not wilfully, but through sheer carelessness in this matter. We forget that our human ideals of justice and honour, though real, are only approximate and liable to perversion. Our spiritual weights and measures need to be checked and revised and corrected. For concerning these also, it is written, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern in the mount." Day by day we have to rectify our ideals by the perfect Character from which they are declining. Constantly in our judgments we must revert to the heavenly rule which alone stands valid. Steadily we must conform our very opinions to the Divine Example. In other words, we need perpetually to try the measure of a man and see how far it falls short of the measure of an angel.

Judge just judgment, said our Lord. With what kind of measure do we habitually gauge the modern city of life? Whom, for instance, do we

consider in our hearts to be the most successful man, or the most enviable woman of our acquaintance? Or, again, which do we reckon to be the most truly prosperous Church? It might be humbling to hear the angels' revision of our verdicts. For each of our judgments becomes also a self-betrayal. It reveals how sorely our conscience itself needs to be rectified and purified before we think as they think, and reckon as they reckon, whose faces see God. The Eternal has given us His own standard whereby we may test and prove all things. If Christ Himself came back among men to-day, in which of our houses would He be most at home? In which of our Churches would His Advent require the least amount of preparation? In which circle of society would His company seem most congenial, and His presence create least need for change? By thoughts like these we may apprehend Plato's mystical saying that the art of measurement would save the soul. Alas! how cheap and fallacious our human judgments appear when they are tested by the measuring reed of the Angel of Death. Tried by that awful standard, all things take new colours and values, and change their proportion and perspective. In the light that shines in a sick chamber, what seemed a great matter yesterday dwindles into insignificance;

while some trifle, like a cup of cold water or a widow's mite, flashes out as of eternal moment. We are careful and troubled about many things in the world, and even in the Church. What will most things which fret our souls now really count for at last, when the absolute standard is made the universal standard, in the white dawn of the Judgment Day?

WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FRIENDS

XVI

WOUNDED IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FRIENDS

"Every passage in the history of our Lord is of unfathomable depth, and affords inexhaustible matter of contemplation." Newman's sentence comes true most of all, when we meditate upon the sufferings of the Son of God. At the outset and threshold we are arrested by the thought of those bodily pangs which He endured for our sakes. The outward instruments of His Passion rise up in memory. We call to mind the buffeting and scourging, the nails and the spear and the thorny crown. We shudder at that lingering crucifixion which the Evangelists are not afraid to describe. And yet we materialize the Gospel if we take physical pain to be the head and front of the suffering of Jesus Christ. It was part indeed, but not the chief part, not even the essential part, of what He bore for us men and for our salvation. His Cross is not to

be considered or construed in this carnal fashion. Other men have tasted in their mortal flesh more bitter pains than Christ. Some of His own martyrs have passed through sharper torments, and they have died smiling, with His Holy Name on their lips. But the disciples were not on that account greater than their Master, nor the servants above their Lord. His Passion stands solitary and supreme, because its physical sufferings were tokens of inward and spiritual anguish. They write their meaning in characters of flesh and blood for all men to read, as they set forth that mysterious, unutterable woe which burdened our Lord when His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. On the Cross itself His sufferings were far more of mind than of body. He gave up the ghost, while the malefactors who hung beside Him were still alive. He died, less by iron wounds in hands and feet, than heart-broken by the weight of the sins of the whole world.

Some elements in this profound truth grow luminous when we ponder them in the light of our own saddest experiences. For human experience becomes an alphabet whereby we may learn humbly and reverently to decipher some of the secret words of God. When we look back across the years and recall the most poignant

suffering which we ourselves have ever known, was it physical pain at all? If men had to bear only what racks the body, this world of ours would be an easier place to live in. The real sword is always that which pierces the soul. Think, for instance, of unselfish devotion which finds itself mocked and derided and spurned. Think of a loyal heart which endures abandonment and betrayal. Think of pure and innocent love which is despised and rejected and trampled under foot. Experiences such as these compose the true thorns in sorrow's crown of sorrow. These things constitute what deserves to be called the martyrdom of man. For wounds in the house of our enemies, it has been said, pride may be prepared. We can steel ourselves to bear them without blenching. But wounds in the house of our friends we have no heart, no courage, to fight against. They take human nature by surprise. These are the intolerable griefs which seem to have no meaning and no healing, which come without a cause and stay without a cure.

Again, when we turn to literature, which is the mirror and record of experience, the same truth emerges and becomes manifest. Literature has been described as "the reflection in words of the great pageant of life, a mimic representation or

reproduction in language of the movement and mystery, the fleeting charms, the recurrent emotions, the gaiety and the melancholy of men's days upon earth." And great literature does not shrink from life's darker ecstasies, its perplexed and tragic contradictions. The masters of tragedy, whose works have power to purify our souls with pity and terror, do not dwell chiefly on physical pains; they are concerned with the exaltations and agonies of the spirit. So the old Greek poets told of Agamemnon, who went scatheless through battle and siege and tempest, only to find shame and death awaiting him at last through the treachery of his own queen. So our English Shakespeare shows us men as unlike outwardly as Wolsey and Falstaff, each of them heart-stricken by his royal friend's disfavour. And there is that other immortal picture of the master of Rome and her legions, slain by the man he loved. "This was the most unkindest cut of all"—the lines are threadbare, but the passion never can be—

> For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,
> Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,
> Quite vanquished him: then burst his mighty heart;
> And, in his mantle muffling up his face, . . .
> great Cæsar fell.

More terrible still is the aged figure of Lear,

driven frantic by the cruelty of the daughters to whom he had given his kingdom away.

And when we turn to the Bible and open its pages, we can hear across the dim generations how heart answers to heart. King David drank the same cup of bitter experience as King Lear, when his favourite son conspired to seize his throne, and his most trusted friend, Ahithophel, played him false in the dark and cloudy day. Listen to the pathos of the psalm: *For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.* All men feel that they can endure anything, they can forgive anything, except this intolerable treachery. But to be deserted by a chosen comrade on whom you have lavished your affection is more than you know how to bear. Surely this is the blackest, cruellest wrong which a human being has learnt to commit. We despair of such a sinner as incapable of redemption. We understand why Dante reserved the nethermost circle of his deepest hell for the men who on earth had betrayed their bene-

factors—"the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot, and downtrodden vassals of perdition."

It is not every day, indeed, that we come face to face with such wickedness in a dramatic and decisive form. Its naked shape appears too inhuman to be very common. Yet in the experience of life we all encounter ingratitude and unkindness and deceit, where we feel that we have the least right to expect them. Sooner or later every man is wounded in the house of his friends, and then he discovers for himself that these wounds of the spirit are the sharpest of all pangs to endure. Nevertheless, so long as affection is tender and trustful and sensitive, such things must needs be, in a world like this and with creatures such as we are. For it is the very nature of a loving heart to feel for others more than they can feel in return, more perhaps than they can feel for themselves. It is the nature of a generous heart to bestow continually more than it can ever hope to receive in repayment. It is the nature of a trustful heart to think better of men than they deserve, and so to put confidence where it is often misplaced. Charity, just because she is so different from cautious, calculating self-interest, cannot help hoping all things and believing all things, and so cannot help being many a time

disappointed. Charity suffereth long just because she is so kind. Charity is abused and betrayed just because she refuses to think evil.

Can we go on to the end of St. Paul's anthem? Can we testify out of our own experience, "Charity beareth all things, endureth all things, and, in spite of all wounds, never faileth"? Does our affection for one another in any way resemble the Divine Love, all-forgiving, all-conquering, which gives hoping for nothing again, which pours out its heart even upon the unthankful and the evil? Is not our purest passion tainted with self-regard? We cannot help looking for affection in return—and we have a right to expect it. But when the response is refused and withheld, when we break our costliest spikenard over the feet of some one who takes it only as a matter of course and answers it with cold, formal phrases, or even repays it by deliberate falsehood—then can we still persevere in the work of faith and labour of love, when it looks as if all love's labour were lost? Here, perhaps, lies the ultimate test and touchstone of human goodness. If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? As Mr. Chesterton puts it, in his characteristic way, charity means pardoning the unpardonable, hope means hoping when things are hopeless, and faith means

believing the incredible—or they are no virtues at all.

Such virtues descend out of heaven from God. They flow from the heart of Him who, having loved His own that were in the world, loved them unto the end—although for their sakes He was always a Man of Sorrows; and when we say unto Him: "What are these wounds in Thy hands?" then He makes answer: "Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." Perhaps it is not in our Lord's Cross and Passion that His patience comes home to us most impressively. To be patient before an unjust judge, to be silent among brutal soldiers, might be, as Dora Greenwell has said, almost a part of self-respect. But patience amid the daily disappointments of a life too good for this world, patience with the follies, the unworthiness, the ingratitude of those He loved best, patience when His dearest friends hindered Him and tempted Him and misunderstood Him and at last left Him alone in His extremity, betrayed by one and denied by another and forsaken by all the rest—these things are our daily example, our daily consolation. If we feel ourselves to be misjudged and misinterpreted, He himself found no man likeminded; He marvelled at His disciples' dullness, asking wistfully: "How is it that ye do

not understand?" If our kinsfolk turn against us and our foes prove to be they of our own household, His own brethren could not believe in Him, and even His mother harboured doubt and suspicion of her Son. If we are deserted and left lonely by those whom we relied on, many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him, until He had to ask the remnant: "Will ye also go away?" If our chosen companions strive to turn us from some hard path of duty, if their very affection lures us to make some great refusal, He himself had those who said concerning the vision of the Cross, "That be far from Thee, Lord!" After long years of service and sacrifice it may be our lot in our own black extremity to find all human friendship a broken reed, to see the lamps of human love flicker and go out in the storm. Even then we take refuge in the Everlasting Faithfulness, who has endured desertion and dereliction to the uttermost—and behold, He is th same yesterday and to-day, and for ever. His wounds are the one hiding-place for all our sorrows, and our human self-denials support themselves against His Cross.

THE SACRED COMMONPLACE

XVII

THE SACRED COMMONPLACE

Those who have travelled through the Holy Land describe the ancient site of Bethel as curiously unimpressive. There are no romantic or inspiring features in the landscape, no *religio loci*, no frowning shades or soaring peaks such as often overshadow primæval shrines. If we had passed that way on the morrow of Jacob's dream, we should have found only a rock-strewn valley in a maze of stunted hills. So ordinary and indistinguishable was the spot where the wandering shepherd lay down to sleep because darkness had overtaken him. Yet just there, at that chance halting-place, the pilgrim saw heaven opened, and entered into the ineffable presence of God. A lesson, surely, spoken as by the lips of Nature herself—a lesson which human souls are slow to learn. Through long centuries men who claimed Jacob for their father kept up a narrow local worship only a few miles

from that Bethel where he had been shown the sacredness of common places and common things. And the ghost of the same Samaritan superstition haunts us to-day. We still shrink from the grandeur of the truth which Christ revealed, that this mountain, or this temple, is in itself no holier than any other. The poorest structure may be filled with the glory of the Spirit. The meanest corner of the world may become consecrated ground. Christians still go on speaking about the House of God, using the name by metaphor for the building where they meet to worship. But in its proper sense that name does not belong to churches made with hands. God's House is wherever we wake up to find ourselves at home with God in spirit and in truth, wherever we obtain His promises and taste His good gift and the powers of the world to come. *How dreadful is this place:* it may be among the meadows where summer afternoons are spacious; it may be down in the clamour of crowded streets; it may be in some great cathedral with chanted litanies, or in a quiet chamber whose door shuts out the world—this *any* place where God grants the vision, where God lets down the ladder.

The principle here involved is more often assumed in the New Testament and taken for

granted, than put into explicit words. The profound truth of the Divine immanence may indeed be perverted and abused. Yet we dare not think of the Father of our spirits as apart and aloof from His children. No language can express His awful nearness. Though the Creator is eternally distinct from creation, He does not forsake the work of His own hands. And we must confess concerning the house of human life that its builder and maker is God. Nothing short of this is involved in the Christian view of the world. For instance, we walk through the woods in winter,

> When yellow leaves or none or few do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare, ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.

Nevertheless a Christian can say, "Surely the Lord is in this wintry place." For he knows that one creative purpose is living under the withered foliage and faded colour and frozen sod. He reads these tokens of decay and desolation as the terms in a mighty order, the processes of an endless renewal. He is aware of the perfect Will working above them and through them and in them all, and there falls upon his spirit "the shudder of amazement and the thrill of love."

So again we believe that God is present, not

merely in the transformations of nature, but more surely still in all the flux and change of human society. Sometimes it happens that politicians stop short in the midst of their wrangling, and suddenly become conscious that they are, as they say, "making history." In a far deeper sense God Himself is always making history. The fall of empires, the clash of armies, the currents of trade, the courses of thought, the issues of action, are all swayed by His breath and ordered by His righteous judgments. God was in the falling of the leaves last autumn; God was in the industrial and intellectual revolutions of the last century. For with Him there is no respect of persons, or places, or times. This immense truth, when it dawns upon us, transfigures the common earth we tread and fills the humblest lives with solemn and mysterious meaning. Generations of men have knelt in trembling reverence before the ark or the altar, which they believed to be the sanctuary of the Real Presence. But if that Presence be in very truth everywhere, a Presence that is not to be put by, if each field be God's acre, and each element God's minister, and each soul God's shrine,

> Why, where's the need of temple, when the walls
> O' the world are that?

—when day and night are telling of His glory and life and death are singing to His praise.

When we turn from these wider thoughts to consider the lives of individual men and women, we begin to realize how the truth of God's immanence is balanced and completed by the not less wonderful truth of God's personal and predestinating love. "All our lives," it has been said, "are just a thought of the Eternal, which will have as clear an expression as we will let it." Our outward circumstances are instinct with the living pressure of His tenderness. Our inward experiences are full of the pulses of the Holy Ghost. Each of us must learn to say of the place where his own lot is cast: "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." These prosaic duties, these commonplace companions, these obscure self-denials, are part of God's high calling and election. He has appointed them, and permitted them, in order that they may become channels of His grace and instruments of His education and sacraments of His love, without which we cannot be made perfect. No lower faith can give us the victory over the manifold disappointments of life. Very few people really believe that they are in their right place in the world. Sometimes they revolt silently, in bitterness of soul. Often they

try painfully to make the best of things. But they are persuaded that they deserve a far different lot, and they watch eagerly or wistfully for their change to come. Life for so many people seems to be "one long doing without, more or less patiently." The disappointed are a great multitude whom no man can number. How often a happy wedding means that some other man has missed the bride he dreamed of, or that some other woman has missed the bridegroom of her secret hopes. Whenever a vacant pulpit is filled, other expectant ministers have to turn back disheartened to posts which they would so thankfully resign. But this truth that God Himself lives in our commonest circumstances implies that there is a blessing hidden even in these very things which hem us in and hold us down. We beat against our barriers and limitations; yet these very things, if we only knew it, are nothing else than the Everlasting Arms, encircling and embracing us with everlasting love. In these very things, and nowhere else, we can find the rest that remaineth for the people of God. In seasons of experience when labour seems most wearisome and profitless, and the drudgery of it most exasperating, and the necessity for it most cruel, when we are tempted to despise and neglect our poor mean

present in hope of some golden future, then by one revealing flash God shows us where we are.

> Burningly it came on me all at once,
> This was the place!

This place—this narrow lodging, this dingy office, this stupid shop, this vulgar company, this dreary street, this bewildering city—this is none other than the House of God. Just this, and no other place than this, is the school for my training, the stage for my heroism, the altar for my sacrifice, according to the will of God. All this, which besets me behind and before, is God Himself, surrounding me and subduing me that He may make a home in my heart.

The sacredness of ordinary circumstances implies the sacredness of our commonplace experiences. Many Christians stand still in their religious life because they expect some great baptism of the Spirit. They are waiting for an angel to come down and trouble the pool of emotion, waiting for some pure celestial rapture of joy and peace to overflow their souls. But it is true of our inward experience that the Lord is there, though we know it not. Nay, our deepest thoughts of God, our hidden longings after God, bear witness to God's presence within. Our very shame and remorse are wrought by His Spirit in

our spirits. Our inward dryness and dearth, our thirst after some better blessing, become tokens and pledges that the All-blessed One is moving in our hearts already, like a seed that wants room for itself to grow. Again and again, when we have been brought very low, estranged from earthly love, left bankrupt of our treasures, sickened of our own self-will—then, by sudden intuition, we have become aware of the meaning and purpose in it all. "How dreadful is this solitude," we had to say; "surely the Lord is in this pain, this parting, this disappointment, this barrenness of heart, though we knew it not. Surely this valley of humiliation is the House of God and the gate of heaven."

A parallel to Jacob's surprise at Bethel appears in an earlier experience of the patriarchal family. What thoughts were in Isaac's mind when he followed his father Abraham on that strange journey which they took together into the land of Moriah? He knew the track which they travelled, the steep hillside which they climbed. He was familiar with the common ritual of the patriarch's worship—the stones and wood and fire—but where was the offering? What awe fell upon his soul when he found at last that this was the place where he must lie down willingly upon the altar, which—read the story as we may—

meant for father and son alike nothing less than the sacrifice of self. Have we never wondered what was the goal of some road along which we were strangely led, a steep and lonely track which we followed with aimless feet, a pathway of preparation and suspense, whose end lay out of sight? Until we woke up at last to God's awful nearness, when through the veil of the commonplace He laid His naked Hand upon us, and we knew that He was claiming our very selves, and He taught us to say: *Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*

Concerning one great sufferer, Charles Lamb could write: "She gave her heart to the Purifier, and her will to the Will that governs the universe." *Wherefore let them that suffer according to the Will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL

XVIII

HE RESTORETH MY SOUL

THE ancient village church stands wrinkled and crumbling. From one century to another it has been patched and altered by the rude forefathers of the hamlet who lie sleeping round it, until to-day its structure is so disguised and defaced that the first Norman builder would scarce recognize his own work. People agree that their church must be restored; and the architect makes his survey, and the vicar collects funds, and the masons begin. Now a wise restoration will endeavour simply to remove the defacements and repair the ruin. It will only build up what is broken and put back what has been destroyed; it will strip the plaster from the pillars, and take the whitewash out of the carving, and so leave the old church as nearly as possible like its original design.

He restoreth my soul. That word implies

that I myself am inwardly ruined and decayed. My heart is wasted with wasting years. My character is defaced by the handiwork of evil. I am all unlike that fair pattern in the mount, the eternal idea and intention of God concerning me. And yet I can never restore myself. When I try to reform, I only patch and mend the fabric after my own poor notion of correctness, and increase my unlikeness to the Divine plan. My efforts after moral self-repair answer to those melancholy attempts at church restoration which complete the havoc wrought by time. Ruskin declared that modern restoration always spells destruction, because no modern designers and craftsmen can catch the spirit and the skill of the early builders. So it fares with the soul, whose builder and maker is God. No one else is able to reconstruct His original design. He who made me at the beginning must Himself re-make me, if I am to become a temple fit for His habitation, a shrine for His glory. Praise God, He is the God of repair, the God who takes men's broken lives into His own hands and mends them: *He restoreth my soul.*

Here lies a venerable manuscript, written over with additions and emendations by a long succession of scribes. In many a passage the original letters are so faded and erased, the

text has been so changed and corrupted, that it seems hopeless to discover the primitive sense. Our modern critics attempt, as they say, to restore the right reading. They go to work, partly by comparison, partly by conjecture, and they try to bring out something like what the author really wrote. But it is a painful and precarious task. If only the author himself could come back for an hour to sit by their side and settle their questionings and turn guesswork into certainty—that would be a restoration of the text indeed.

My soul is like that ancient parchment. It was white once, when the finger of God traced upon it lines of His own truth and love. But now the heavenly script is all darkened and blotted with earthly corruptions. "What self wrote in the margin has crept into the text." Follies of proud fancy, and glosses of tradition, and mordant memories of sin have overlaid that first autograph of the Most High. When I am perplexed about right or wrong, I am often bidden to "follow nature." But my very nature itself is full of confused, conflicting readings. One instinct contradicts another, this sentence of conscience goes against the next; and no rules of philosophy, no guesses of expediency, can make me certain that I understand them

aright. God's manuscript in the soul is become a palimpsest of errors and defilements:

> Only here and there we can discern
> Some fair, fine trace of what was written once,
> Some upstroke of an alpha and omega,
> Expressing the true Scripture.

There is no way to decipher and interpret the inward law apart from Him who first inscribed it on fleshy tables of the heart. The quaint epitaph which Benjamin Franklin composed for himself closes with the hope that he may "appear in a new and more beautiful edition, corrected and amended by the Author." And it is not irreverent to say that no one except our Author is able to become our Editor: *He restoreth my soul.*

Here hangs a faded portrait, painted long ago by some famous master. But now it is dim with age, and coated with the dust of years, and varnished by would-be preservers — until you hardly detect the face which once gazed out of its canvas; you have no idea what it was like when it left the easel. The owner of the picture decides that it must be restored. He sends it to some careful cleaner, perhaps he suffers the tints to be coloured anew, and generally the portrait will return half spoilt in the process. After all is done, it does not look as it looked when the

master said "finished" and signed his monogram in the corner. But those fingers have been stiff for generations, and no other hand can perfectly revive his touch. An early picture of Rossetti's was recently exhibited with the inscription on its frame: "Repainted by the artist." Nothing less than that can be an adequate restoration.

He restoreth my soul. God's image, which He stamped on our being when He created us, has become blurred and marred, crusted over with selfishness, varnished with hypocrisy, until we have hardly any Divine likeness left. We may discern the glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ. There shines the express image of what human nature was meant to be. As we look on this picture and on that, and contrast ourselves with the Son of Man, we realize how much we need to be restored. Yet what skill have we available for such a task? What moralist by his maxims, what priest by his penances, can reproduce the lineaments of lost innocence, the beauty of vanished holiness? That Divine image is effaced for ever, unless it be revived by the very hand of the Eternal Artist, of whom it is written: *He restoreth my soul.*

The doctrine of man's fall is no theological fiction: it corresponds with the sad realities of inward experience. And the good news of man's

redemption is the discovery of God Himself intervening to restore His children's souls, in which His plan has been ruined, and His truth degraded, and His image blotted out. Moreover this glorious Gospel applies not simply to the profligate and the irreligious—to the lapsed masses, as preachers say. How many Christians are free from the sense of lapse and loss within? Who of us has kept the pure fervour of his early devotion? Who has not forgotten his first vows and left his first love? Who has not fallen short in his service and sacrifice for others? The best of us need to be consecrated afresh, the holiest need to be baptized anew. And for each of us the time of the restitution of all things can be—not to-morrow, but to-day. The One Restorer and Reviver of souls is still waiting to fulfil His ancient promise. If our power to do good seems paralyzed, the withered hand shall be made whole. If our senses have grown dull to heavenly voices, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. If our spiritual vision has waxed dim, the blind eyes shall be opened—yea, the lame shall leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sing, as He leadeth them in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

"Behold, I make all things new"; to some this sounds an incredible promise, and they

cannot receive it. Nothing, they feel, will ever make them now the men they once hoped to be. They have lost their chances and squandered their years and wrecked their souls beyond repair. And yet nature's miracle which is repeated every springtime rebukes them and says, "O ye of little faith." A festival at the end of May used to commemorate an English king's restoration; shall we keep no festival year by year of God's glorious restoration of life and beauty to His world? In December we were walking in a bleak, barren land; the fields had no colour, the trees no foliage, the birds no song. But the angels of sunshine and rain have worked their sweet miracles once more, and as we wander through woods and meadows and gardens amid the pageant of summer, we confess again, "Thou renewest the face of the earth."

And shall there be no quickening and reviving of the deeper life within? Is there no renewal for the heart so ravaged and forlorn, no recovery of vanished blessings, no resurrection from the graves of hope and joy? Some things, indeed, are lost finally and beyond recall. Even the Gospel has no charm to stay the morning star, no power to bring back the irrevocable, inexorable years. But though the outward man may perish, the inward man shall be renewed, day by day.

. . . He ruins my plans, He baffles my pride, He scatters my friends, He empties my home, He buries my treasure, He weakens my body; but O, He restoreth my soul. His marvellous repair builds up my heart, which time had wasted, and all my hopes re-swell.

> Now in age, I bud again.
> After so many deaths, I live and write.
> I once more smell the dew and rain. . .
> O my only Light,
> It cannot be that I am he
> On whom Thy tempests fell all night!

WHEN THOU MAKEST A FEAST

XIX

WHEN THOU MAKEST A FEAST

The Son of Man came eating and drinking. He came from above, as a heavenly Stranger, yet He took His place by the world's hearth-fire. Among all sorts and conditions of men He lived as one who was at home. When He Himself had no roof for His head, He accepted hospitality freely, alike from high and low. We never once hear of Him refusing an invitation. He went to be the guest of the Pharisee to-day and of the publican to-morrow, as either bade Him welcome. And it appears from the Gospels that our Lord's habit in this respect was part of a fixed design. Deliberately and of set purpose He shocked men's conventional ideas about the garb and bearing which befitted a prophet. To become venerated as a holy man, with a mission from God, required then what it still requires in many Eastern lands. It demanded a certain amount of outward and obvious self-mortification. It meant

that you must go and live aloof from your fellows, and renounce their natural joys and comforts; you must become like the Baptist in the desert, a hermit, an ascetic, a devotee. But our Lord steadily refused to conform to this popular Oriental type of holiness. He would not purchase credit for sanctity on such terms. John, indeed, had come as an austere recluse, eating no bread neither drinking wine. But Jesus Himself came genial and gracious and familiar with common people, and intimate with all ranks and classes of society. Nay, He risked His reputation to do it — until His enemies reviled Him as a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. Christ began His mighty works by brimming over the wine-cups at a village wedding. Some of His greatest parables hinge upon the fitness of human festivities and the privilege of them that are bidden. By precept and example, our Lord declared that it is meet to make merry and be glad with our friends in due season. He even commanded His own friends to commemorate His Passion by a sacred feast. Thus distinctly He repudiated the false, carnal notion of ascetic holiness—the ideal of the Trappist and the Carthusian—which still haunts the Church's imagination. Thus naturally He brought men back to the primitive

Hebrew truth, that real religion should be pitched in the key of gladness—as the most sacred days in the Jewish calendar were not fasts, but feasts of jubilant thanksgiving and praise.

In one memorable and decisive utterance our Lord has laid down the law of Christian hospitality. It was spoken at a rich man's table, where He Himself was sitting at meat. And we observe that He characteristically refrains from any of those sumptuary regulations which have been so dear to social and ecclesiastical reformers. It may be indeed a question whether, as Ruskin says, luxury would be desired by any of us, if we saw unveiled at our side the suffering which accompanies it in the world. But Christ does not directly concern Himself about our luxurious fare. He simply commands us to revise our list of invitations. *Call not thy rich neighbours, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee.* He tells us to beware above all things lest we choose our guests for the sake of what we may receive from them in return. And clearly that is no genuine hospitality which we exercise only in the hope of being "recompensed," somehow or other, in the end. Not that there need be anything immoral about giving a dinner to possible clients or cus-

tomers—only, that is no true hospitality; it is mere ground-bait. "When thou makest a feast," Christ says in effect, "let it be something nobler than such calculated selfishness. Make it a real banquet of thanksgiving to the Heavenly Giver of all."

The point will grow clearer if we consider for a moment the proper meaning of grace before meat. Such a grace surely ought to mean that we recollect how little we merit our mercies, that we are astonished and humbled to think of the multitudes from whom God has withheld what He pours into our lap, that we confess how in our prosperity we are no more deserving than our brothers and sisters in their adversity, that we delight to share with them those good gifts which the Father has lavished upon us. The best grace before meat is the presence of some guest at our board who can never recompense us one whit, whom we have bidden out of pure and simple kindness of heart. "Am I then to turn my home into a free shelter for tramps, and make my children sit at table with the outcasts of the streets?" Christ does not say so. But He does say, in most striking and dramatic phraseology, that our gratitude for what we possess should be shown by sharing God's bounty generously with those who lack. He says,

"Treat the disinherited of this world as though their need were not a stigma, but rather a claim." He does not say, "Treat every one alike"; but He says, "Treat people as though their money in itself did not matter. Base your discrimination on something more vital, which lies closer to the reality." How many of us make a habit of trying to obey this most practical commandment? If you had lived in Galilee in the days of Herod the Tetrarch, would you have obeyed it then? If you had been a ruler of the synagogue at Capernaum, would you have thought shame to sit at meat with rude fishermen? If you had owned a white villa on the hillside above Nazareth, would you ever have made a feast which gave welcome to the village carpenter? Liddon was right when he said: "To believe that a man with £60 a year is just as much worthy of respect as a man with £6,000, you must be seriously a Christian."

But the principle of our Lord's command covers a wider area than the dinner-table. How few Christians, clothed in soft raiment, realize the hard, rough, dreary lot, so straitened and colourless and wearisome, which belongs to the great mass of their fellow-men. Christ tells us, in effect, that the one and only way to hallow what we enjoy, is to associate ourselves eagerly

and habitually with those who are less favoured and can never give us back anything in return. There is no truer form of thanksgiving to the Father of lights than to befriend those children of His from whom He has made us to differ in outward fortune. There exists no other spiritual safeguard against the canker of possessions, no other antidote to the slow poison of prosperity which corrupts the soul. Yet how many of us Christians, in the sheltered peace of our homes, remember the multitudes of lonely people who must perforce eat their Sunday meal, week after week, in bare lodgings? There is no place on earth where a young man, or a young woman, can feel so utterly forlorn as in the solitude of a great city. The due and proper thanksgiving for our fireside happiness is sometimes to share its cheer with a homeless stranger. Again, how many of us Christians, when we gather our children for their summer holiday, remember those other children, orphaned or impoverished, even among our own acquaintance, for whom no such holiday comes round? "They cannot recompense thee," but just on that account thou mayest be blessed through them. When thou takest a holiday, learn to multiply its benediction by dividing part of its pleasure with those who can never give thee aught but their thanks in return.

Yet again the principle of Christ's command penetrates deeper still. Not long ago a volume of "Recollections" was published, whose author, in a vein of mellow wisdom, formulated for the guidance of his grandchildren some precepts which he had gleaned from his own experience of life. Amongst other maxims, he wrote: "Always, as far as possible, cultivate the society of your superiors." Now that sounds so reasonable, so full of excellent sense, and it chimes in so delightfully with our inclination. What can be more charming than to mix with people of real distinction, to cultivate literary and scientific friends, to share with them the feast of reason and the flow of soul? But our Lord's piercing word comes home to us, even concerning such *symposia* as these. He warns us that there lies a peril in the possession of mental wealth, and the gratification of intellectual tastes. Self-culture may turn into a subtle and dismal form of self-indulgence. The poor and the maimed and the blind whom Christ commends to us include those who are poorly educated, who have never had our opportunities to lay hands on the key of knowledge or to explore the palace of art. They include the people of imperfect breeding, with inferior minds and sluggish wits and dull imaginations. Remember to leave some

seats at your table and some room in your sympathy for such as these. Who made you to differ from them? Any morning you may wake up to find your furnished memory a blank, your keen brain hopelessly tangled. As you thank God humbly for His gifts and mercies, you will dedicate them to the service of those slow, stupid people who are blind and deaf to so much that makes your own life worth living. When you pay a call let it often be not for the sake of pleasure to receive but for the sake of kindness to bestow. On a Christian woman's visiting list, not the last place but the first place belongs to the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. If it be true that you may tell a man by the company he keeps, then you may tell a saint by the visits he pays and the guests he entertains.

We may venture to crystallize this rule of Christian hospitality into a sentence, and say: "When thou makest a feast, make a sacrifice too." Theologians have disputed what was the original idea of animal sacrifice. Probably in its earliest form it had some festal connection. The thought of sin offerings came later, when the human conscience had grown more sensitive to moral guilt and remorse. But in the beginning, it seems that a sacrifice meant a communion with God, rather than a propitiation of God. Some

scholars have tried to show that among the early Hebrews and their Arab kinsmen animals were killed and eaten only on solemn occasions. To slaughter a beast for food was a serious religious act, which must be consecrated by offering to God the life-blood which was spilled. And so the feast involved a sacrifice, and the sacrifice was followed by a feast which the Deity shared with His worshippers while the smoke went up as a sweet savour to the sky. Other and profounder moral ideas blended themselves in later times with the primitive intention of sacrifice. But part of its simplest and earliest meaning was to make God Himself a guest at your festival, which thus became a communion with Him. And the loftiest spiritual conception of Christian self-sacrifice in the New Testament has its analogies with those crude material offerings. Christ commands us, in effect, to welcome Him as the permanent Guest at our table, to entertain Him in the persons of His afflicted and His little ones and His poor. "When thou makest a feast," He seems to say, "let there be some visible sign of My true Cross." For that Cross is the eternal death of selfishness and self-seeking. God has so loved the world—with the Love which seeks not its own, which has no thought of recompense or reward. Neverthless,

He promises us that we shall be recompensed in the end—if we forget to care about reward and to scheme for it—blessed and recompensed in the resurrection of the just.

What will that recompense be like? Our Lord described it elsewhere, when He said: *If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? And if ye do good to them that do good to you, what thank have ye? for even sinners do the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for even sinners lend to sinners to receive again as much. But love your enemies, and do them good, and lend, never despairing; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be sons of the Most High; for He is kind towards the unthankful and the evil.* This is the recompense—to be sons of the all-generous God. The supreme reward of goodness is always, in its essence, just to become more perfectly and more permanently good. Its wages are the wages of going on and of growing on. The blessing of the self-forgetful feast-maker is to become more and more self-forgetful, to have a heart continually enlarging, a love that widens and deepens, a spirit that partakes of the Divine nature, a rapture that enters into the very joy of the Lord. And the Bible pictures that Divine beatitude as God's own delight in making ready His everlast-

ing Feast, and of drawing into its circle all His crippled, disinherited children from the highways and the hedges of existence, all the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind.

THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA

XX

THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA

PALESTINE remains one great indispensable commentary on the Bible. Trampled by invaders and vulgarized by tourists, those holy fields still keep their imperishable charm. Much has been taken, but more abides. The same enduring hills are there, and the flowers, and the overarching sky. The Land can still suggest true readings of the Book. If we would understand the allusions of Scripture and enter into the point of view of its writers, we must bring home to ourselves the actual scenes where its history occurred. In earlier ages men hung upon the lips of the pilgrim who had come back from Jerusalem "with his cockle hat and staff and his sandal shoon." And without making that pilgrimage ourselves we can well imagine how the Evangelists must speak with fresh meaning when you open their pages, for instance, on the Mount of Olives beside the little ruined chapel

which bears the inscription *Dominus flevit*, "the Lord hath wept." Those who journey up and down the Holy Land realize in particular how narrow was the stage where the mightiest events took place. The Jordan and the Mediterranean are only forty or fifty miles apart. And from many of the high places in Palestine the eye can range from the purple hills beyond Jordan right across to the shining western sea where the sun goes down. Yet the Hebrew, though he lived so close to salt water, was hardly ever a sailor. His own coast-line had no harbours to speak of, and the sea remained shut against him, a barrier of mystery which severed him from the world beyond. To his thought it suggested something infinite and fathomless, a space unbounded, a strength unknown. In New Testament times we read, indeed, how one much-travelled missionary had perilous experience of seafaring in such vessels as ventured among the rocky islands of the Ægean. St. Paul looks back at the dangers he had undergone: "Thrice I suffered shipwreck, a day and a night have I been in the deep"; and his longest voyage and his worst shipwreck were yet to come. When the Apostle thought of those great water-floods it was not without a sense of their terrible greatness. He had proved for himself the power and might and

majesty and dominion of the sea. To-day men have explored the corners of the ocean, so that it unites the continents which it once divided. We have sounded its hollows and solved its secrets and learned to whisper along its bed. And so we have lost the awe and reverence with which earlier generations regarded the sea. When St. Paul sought to describe *the deep things of God* he chose a phrase which is used elsewhere in the New Testament for deep waters as opposed to shallow. It is difficult for us now to realize all that simpler men felt once when they spoke of the ocean depths in the nature of God.

Yet when we compare those two voices of which one of our own poets has sung, we must confess that the voice of the mountains is not so overwhelming as the voice of the sea. Go out on the beach alone at midnight and listen to that muffled sound, deeper than the rustle of forests, fuller than the tramp of armies, unlike anything else in the world—the murmur of waves beating upon the sand. The same tide ebbed and flowed, the same inarticulate ocean was moaning in the darkness, speaking dumbly of things unspeakable, before ever a man was alive on its shores. The oldest human habitation seems a mushroom of yesterday compared with

the age of the unchangeable sea. No other created thing is so full of eternity and freshness, of infinity and unity, of mystery and endless movement, embracing all things and yet everywhere one and the same. Time writes no wrinkle on its countenance. As it was in the beginning, so it is now, so it shall be until the oath is fulfilled of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth and swears that time shall be no more.

To meditate upon the awful depths in the Divine nature must humble us into reverence and godly fear. *Mira profunditas, mi Deus,* whispered Augustine, *mira profunditas.* We recognize that abysmal deeps of personality lie hidden in man: who can fathom the personality of God? Such a question makes half our theological definitions and speculations seem childish or profane. We confess, indeed, that sacred Name by which the Christian Church has learned to name the Nameless. But its full meaning lies far beyond us and beneath us. It is a deep in which all our thoughts are drowned. And again, to ponder the deep things of God reminds us not only of Divine mysteries, but also of Divine peace. The waves and storms and fretfulness of the ocean appear on its surface; but perpetual calm dwells in the caverns at the

heart of the sea. How can we conceive of the depths of God's nature except as filled with pulses of endless rest?

> Our lives through various scenes are drawn
> And vexed with trifling cares,
> But Thine eternal thought moves on
> Thy undisturbed affairs.

That infinite Life which is self-existing and self-sufficing is Itself the perfect harmony, the perfect tranquillity—the peace of God which passeth all understanding. And the same figure of speech points also to the mystery of the Divine will. God's providence is dark with the colour of the pure, unsearchable sea. Who can measure those hidden tides and currents which move across the ocean? The Psalmist had such thoughts in mind when he cried, *Thy way is in the sea . . . Thy judgments are a great deep.* Who can unravel the destiny of a nation? Who can explain the calling and election of a single man? Who shall say why God has dealt thus and thus with His world, or with any individual soul? Behold, He takes and He refuses, He lifts up and He lays low, He visits and He passes by, He fills with good things and again He sends empty away, according to His own counsel. For His ways are not as our ways,

nor His thoughts as our thoughts. Often we must bow our heads in silence and worship the inscrutable Will. At best we can only answer: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out."

The Gospel is profound, because it appeals to beings with awful capacities for good and for evil. When Heine sang, *My heart is like the sea*, he was in a certain sense affirming that man is made in the Divine image. In each Divine doctrine and command and promise, deep calleth unto deep. So in the simplest Christian sermon we ought to catch some solemn undertone of the Apostolic voice; *Behold, I show you a mystery*. From one point of view, indeed, the Bible is a simple book, because it moves constantly among elemental things like birth and death and hunger and labour and love and duty and shame and parting. Such things seem homely and commonplace just because they are the stuff out of which our life is fashioned; and the aged come back to brood over them and to feel that in these things lie the real problems after all. But the Bible is most profound because it deals with the deep original wound in human nature. It goes down below the pit of our corruption and misery and remorse. It reveals

those abysses of mercy and judgment in which the foundations of our redemption are laid. "I saw there was an ocean of darkness and death—but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness—and in that I saw the infinite love of God."

The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. They are revealed by the same Spirit, through His inward discipline of the soul. You learn them in the depths of bitterness and desertion, when your only Psalm is *De profundis clamavi,* and your only confession, "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me." Or you learn them when you have sunk into some horrible iniquity, and discover there, underneath the very depths of Satan, unfathomable depths of grace. The New Testament hardly appeals to a superficial experience. It stands strangely aloof from "the shallow heavens and the shallow hells of the feebly good and the feebly wicked." But it brings us face to face with the redeeming passion of One who is at home in our uttermost human exultations and agonies. Among all His mighty sayings, perhaps none pierces deeper than this: *Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much.*

Sometimes we grow weary of the threadbare titles which are supposed to distinguish different

schools of Christian thought. People chatter idly about the High Church and the Broad Church and the Low Church. Mr. R. H. Hutton wrote a memorable essay upon what he called the Hard Church. The type of experience and character which we most need to-day might be described as the Deep Church. It is the fellowship of disciples whose hearts are enlarged to apprehend the deep things of God.

ANGELS UNAWARES

XXI

ANGELS UNAWARES

The history of the Hebrews is one long series of migrations and dispersions. Since their first pilgrim father crossed the Euphrates and became a stranger in a strange land, Abraham's children have endured exodus and exile so often that the figure of the Wandering Jew seems like a type of their scattered race. Yet no people ever proved so cohesive in dispersion. In New Testament times the Hebrews abroad outnumbered those in Palestine; but they were Hebrews still. In every city along the shores of the Midland Sea they formed a little Puritan colony, aloof from the heathen, but ready with a welcome for the travelling merchant and a hearing for the travelling teacher of their own faith and blood.

The early Church inherited this primitive bond of kinship and its traditions of hospitality. More than one apostle enforces the duty of entertaining wayfarers who belong to the household of

Christ. Moreover a Christian Jew was counted a renegade by his own countrymen; the fact of his Christianity shut in his face those Ghetto doors which sheltered any orthodox Jewish pilgrim. And so when the Epistle to the Hebrews says with peculiar emphasis, "Forget not to show love unto strangers," the Hebrew disciples would appreciate the stress laid upon showing love to brethren on a journey, who might specially need succour; they would appreciate, too, the allusion to Abraham and Lot and Gideon and Manoah and Tobit, who had all entertained angels unawares. "Play the host generously," says the writer, "and you may perchance harbour heavenly guests like theirs."

Now such a precept certainly does not require the modern Christian to turn his home into a casual ward. Yet there remains a real sense in which we are still bound to show love to strangers, and in which we too may thereby welcome angels whom we least expect.

Our modern Protestant ideas about angels are curiously mixed. We borrow them mainly from Milton; and they came down to him multifariously, through Rabbinic legends and Gnostic fancies and Neoplatonic speculations and scholastic disputes. The result belongs less to religion than to the mythology of poetry and art;

yet we habitually read that mythology into the Bible. It is true indeed that our Lord Himself distinctly acknowledges the reality of these spiritual beings; but in Scripture the functions of angels almost overshadow their personality. The name stands for that which embodies to us either a manifestation or a message of the Most High; its two senses are not always distinguished, but together they cover the chief uses of the word in the Bible. An angel is some special form in which God speaks, or works, or shows Himself; it is an agent or an instrument that brings Him into touch with men. And this precept implies that any passing guest may prove an angel to us—may become a living medium of God's message, a personal channel of God's grace to our souls.

There were ancient nations who had only one word to mean both stranger and enemy; each new-comer was treated as a foe until he proved himself a friend. And we are still often tempted to think evil of people before we have had time to test their goodness. Perhaps some plausible stranger has taken you in, and made you suspect all his tribe. Nothing sours the heart like being duped by those to whom your faith had imputed its own righteousness. After a few such trials you persuade yourself that the world at large is

not fit to be trusted, and that every man must be considered a rogue until he has proved himself honest. And yet no temper is less Christian than this spirit of general suspicion. Better trust ten times and be deceived, than suspect one soul unjustly. The love which Christ requires us to show to strangers is the love which thinketh no evil, which believeth all things and hopeth all things, which is sometimes betrayed but never in despair.

Yet modern Christians neglect this precept not so much because they are too suspicious as because they are too busy. In simpler times when strangers came like single spies, it was not so difficult to seek them out and make them welcome. But in our congested civilization we jostle among battalions of unknown folk every day, and we put on, perforce, the armour of reserve. We have enough acquaintances already, so many that their mere number goes to dilute the quality of friendship. What man has more than a certain available maximum of spare thought and interest? Which of us has time to show any real love to the units in this bewildering crowd?

The social world finds its analogue in the physical. We are told that all material substance consists of the interaction of innumerable separate

tiny atoms, which are always in swiftest motion, always clashing against each other, and making millions of impacts every second. And yet not one of these molecules is forgotten before God; and ye are of more value than many molecules. The Father of Spirits must surely guide and restrain the contacts and encounters of each human soul that He has made. It is no vague chance or blind destiny which brings strangers to our tent door. And therefore *we must cherish a certain reverence for the unexpected:* we must keep an open heart towards these unknown pilgrims whom God's election has sent across our path or settled in our camp. Every year, at any rate, some fresh strangers detach themselves from the dim mass, and definitely enter our service or our circle; and we count them as "new people," not yet properly known. Yet each of them is a brother immortal, who inherits an equal share with us in God's solicitude. For each one of them Christ died. In each one of them the Holy Ghost is dwelling, and working, and striving. And each dullest stranger has his own heart-secrets of joy and bitterness, his inward shames and sacrifices which we cannot estimate, a hidden romance which we never guess, a coming destiny of which we never even dream. We simply do not know how much may

be in him, how much he may become to us or may do for us, in the future.

There are measureless possibilities in a stranger. When Haroun Al Raschid was Caliph, any strayed reveller in the streets of Baghdad might prove to be the Commander of the Faithful in disguise. We ought to discern under the face of each stranger the countenance of Christ Himself. Inasmuch as we show love to one of the least of them, we are showing love to Him. There is an apocryphal saying recorded of our Lord, "Never be joyful except when ye shall look upon your brother in love." And it holds true, even when the brother is a stranger. The happy spirit which can so regard him, brings you straightway into touch with him; it opens an avenue into his heart.

That stranger may need you less than you need him; he may come as a claim on your pity, a call for your devotion, an opportunity for your service. God has sent this needy angel to rouse you out of sloth and ease and indulgence, to build again the broken altar for a sacrifice of yourself. "Are they not all ministering spirits?" Nay, not all. God's angel is sometimes sent, not to minister to us, but to be ministered unto: so that we may win thereby the grace of those who give rather than receive.

We do it all unawares. We often grow half-

impatient of these strangers who require so much, and seem to bestow so little. The hospitable heart goes on to the end, unconscious how its most exacting guests were only the representatives of One who shall say at last, "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in."

Nothing on this earth is so pathetic as the way in which we miss the meaning of life, and when our blessings meet us we pass by ignorantly on the other side. We refuse them, as we entertain them, *unawares*. Alas! for the grace we have lost without knowing it. We take our daily bread unwittingly and unworthily, not discerning the Lord's body. We look for God in earthquake or in fire, not listening for the still small voice. It is written of certain angels, that "their countenances were like lightning"; but it is not said that their voices were like thunder. Dante describes Beatrice's speech as being, like Cordelia's, soft and low *con angelica voce*. And often our messages most direct from heaven fall softly from children's lips, or are murmured in the tones of sorrow and sickness. God's messenger does not sound a trumpet or lift up his voice in the streets. Whoso hath ears to hear, let him keep silence for what the angels say.

"We are come unto an innumerable company of angels": this is the experience of the Christian.

To him all the common order of life and its natural changes seem instinct with spiritual presences and powers. To him the glory and loveliness of the outward world are, as Newman says, "the waving of their garments, whose faces see God." The storms and calms of nature become vocal. "Some said, it thundered; others said, an angel spake to Him."

It is written again, "Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him." The wayside angels of circumstance still meet us, day by day, in homely garb and guise. But as we show them love, and welcome each daily event that happens as being a token to us of the will of God, we find that each carries its own secret and peculiar blessing. Concerning such trivial things, it may be said, "Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones." The hands which they hold out to us are laden with perfect love.

As we grow hospitable to God's daily messages and mercies, we find ministers of grace compassing our path and our lying down. Verily He has given His angels charge concerning us: perchance, the angel of pain, to purify; or the angel of disappointment, to humble; or the angel of loss, to enrich. But all His angels work together for good to them that love Him.

THE WINGS OF A DOVE

XXII

THE WINGS OF A DOVE

In the delightful imitation of Aristophanes, which he has entitled "The Paradise of Birds," Mr. W. J. Courthorpe describes the winged creatures assembled in council to discuss the inferiority of human kind. Man, they agree, is a failure, because he is tied and tethered to the earth.

> He never can mount like the swallows
> That dashed round his steeples to pair,
> Or hawked the bright flies in the hollows
> Of delicate air.

Perhaps it is some dim sense of this defect in ourselves which invests the pictures of white-winged angels with such charm for little children. Forty years ago, when Lytton tried to imagine what "The Coming Race" would be like, he clothed each member of it with mighty pinions, cunningly fashioned to soar through the spaces of the sky. To-day we can see that pro-

phecy being actually fulfilled before our eyes. But the longing of the ancient Psalmist, *O that I had wings like a dove,* was doubtless an aspiration of the spirit, which he never expected to come true in any literal or material way. If we take the traditional interpretation of the fifty-fifth Psalm, it belongs to the crisis of David's later life, the rebellion of Absalom and Ahithophel against the aged king, when his favourite son revolted and his trusted friend played the traitor. Then, in the double bitterness of exile and desertion, David grows heart-sick and weary of a world which can breed such betrayal. He envies the birds in the blue above him as he watches their flight towards the desert. *O that I had wings like a dove,* he cries, *then would I fly away and be at rest.*

This is "the cry of the human heart" in every age. Still it quivers on men's lips, often when they are not pierced with wounds as deep as David's. None of us believe that we live in the best possible corner of the best possible world. We go about restless and discontented, eager to escape from our circumstances, to cut loose from our moorings and sail away across the sea. It is as though all men were haunted with memories of their lost Eden. The rustle of its palm-trees, the murmur of its fourfold river, sound like an

undertone through the legends of the race. The traditions of every people have clustered their fairest fancies round some hidden spot on the earth's surface, secluded from the tumult and the pain of time. They tell of a haunt of ancient peace, beyond the sterner laws and rougher visitations of the common world; a fastness of perpetual calm, against which the tempests blow their challenging horns unheeded. In our days, indeed, geography has robbed the dream of local habitation. That happy land is a blank on the charts. No mariner has sighted St. Brandan's Isle beyond the bars of the sunset. The earthly paradise has never been regained. Yet deep in the soul of man dwells this old, instinctive, unconquerable yearning for a haven and home of quietness. Which of us has not had to confess at one time or another, "I am tired of this narrow, monotonous existence, with its petty interests, its profitless cares. I am sick of worry, and sorrow, and hope deferred, and trust betrayed, and love's labour lost. O that I had wings like a dove: then would I flee away to that place—if not in the world, then just beyond it—where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."

And there is something inspiring and prophetic even in our human discontent. Alas! for the

self-satisfied man who never feels the lack of wings, because he is become as one of the beasts that perish. This quenchless longing for a state far above our circumstances and beyond ourselves is like an intuition of what we are, a strong prevision of what we shall be. How can a king be happy in exile, plagued with the dream of that imperial palace whence he came! It is man's royal nature which keeps him restless. Foxes indeed have holes and the birds of the air nests; but no son of man can find where to lay his head except on the bosom of God. Against the Psalmist's passionate prayer a mystical writer has set this other Scripture: *The dove found no rest for the sole of her foot: so she returned unto Him into the ark. Then He put forth His hand and took her, and pulled her in unto Him into the ark.* And the two passages together make a parable of the soul's quest for peace, to teach us where and how real peace can be found.

We may illustrate this lesson from the story of Jonah. Indeed, the name Jonah is the Hebrew word for a dove, and in one aspect the Book of Jonah becomes a vivid apologue of the dove that found no rest in flight, the man who tried to escape from his circumstances and desert his mission, and failed. Many a young Englishman would fain try Jonah's plan for evading life's

stern and painful duties. The sails of an emigrant ship are the white wings which he covets. If he could pay his fare, not to Tarshish, for the world is wider now, but to Texas or to Tasmania, the far west or the far south, then he would feel himself on the highway to satisfaction. Yet if his wildest wish were granted, if he could cross the rim of the horizon and get outside the restraints and obligations which hamper him here, two awful, inevitable facts would still remain unaltered. One fact is the man himself. He quits his country, but his character clings to him. He shifts his sky, but he cannot shift his soul. The inner entity of a human being—his love, and hope, and shame, and conscience, and memory—this is something which goes where he goes, and stays where he stays, and follows him as he wanders, and abides with him where he enters in, and lives with him all day long, and walks ghostly through his dreams at night. And the other fact, which no man can fly away from, is God. *Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, and whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost part of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. . . .*

We can never find the rest we long for until these two inevitable facts, God and self, are made one. "Join thyself to the Eternal," said Augustine, "and be at rest." The dove which found no refuge in ranging over the troubled waters came back at last on her weary pinions to her one resting-place. So the only refuge for the creature is the bosom of the Creator. God's thoughts, God's love, God's will, God's judgments are man's home. And to think His thoughts, to love His love, to choose His will, to judge His judgments—that, and that only, is to be at home.

She returned unto Him into the ark. The ark in our parable stands for no Church, no creed, but rather for the secret place of God's presence —the heaven which is round about Him, "which is everywhere if we could only enter it, and yet almost nowhere, because so few of us can." Nevertheless the condition is simple. All the saints bear witness that self-surrender is the key which unlocks this door. Here is the secret—to give up our hopeless search abroad for what is waiting at home, to end roving and struggling and fluttering, to cease from our self-seeking and our self-will, to abandon ourselves with all our hopes and fears to the Divine Love, and so to find in the Everlasting Arms and the Everlasting Will that rest which remaineth for the people of

God. "In His Will is our peace," and only in His Will. Because the peace which God gives is the peace which God has. And His peace which passeth all understanding can only possess a heart which has learnt to throb in unison with the Heart of All. But to such a one the Divine Voice bears perpetual witness: "Thou art ever with Me, and all that I have is thine."

This mystical parable points further to God's share in man's salvation. The dove merely fluttered up to the window: then He put forth His hand and took her and pulled her in unto Him into the ark. Often we speak as though unbelief were a passive thing, and faith something active, a putting forth of our strength to change ourselves, or our circumstances, or our relation to God. But, as a wise teacher declares, the very reverse is the truth. Unbelief is rebellious activity for the attainment of an object which we cannot be content to leave in God's hands—that is, our own happiness. Faith is the giving up of independent activity, whereby a man resigns himself to the Divine grasp, and says, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Nothing short of our first Cause will suffice for our last End. "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts must ever be restless until we find rest in Thee."

Restless in this world, or in any other. There are some who would persuade us that the mere act of dying can of itself transform a character, that when the soul dips her torn, soiled plumage in the river of death she shall rise baptized into beauty, as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. But the Scripture and the Spirit assure us of no such magic change. They warn us rather that the law of moral continuity is not broken. He that is filthy shall be filthy still; he that is restless shall be restless still. And there are few more fearful pictures of a future than that which Dante dreamed when he saw in his vision clouds of guilty, homeless souls blown about by the storms of another world, like lost birds on the winter blast. The nature of things knows no variableness. God and the soul stand sure. And when we pray that our Father's Will may be done on earth as it is done in heaven, we are praying that heaven may come down to earth. For we are confessing that where His Will is done there is heaven, and there alone. Day by day "the Will of God is bearing all things that yield to it towards the joy of their Lord. He who knows this ceases to strive with it and provide against it, and is borne on unresistingly towards the blessedness to which it presses to carry him."

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME

XXIII

THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME

A NEW movement in the world always has to frame new words and phrases in which to express itself. This law of human nature is operative to-day. Since many of us can remember, a Darwinian dialect has arisen to explain theories of development, and an æsthetic dialect has been fashioned to set forth theories of art. Physical inventions and discoveries have created a host of strange terms to correspond. We were compelled to coin fresh words which our grandfathers never heard of before we could discourse about motor-cars and submarines and aeroplanes. For new wine demands new bottles; and whenever the vintage ripens and the winepress fills, the bottles are not lacking. The same thing occurs, still more conspicuously, in times of religious revival. Pentecost has this sure sign and sequel, that men begin to speak with new tongues, as the Spirit gives them utterance. They employ

old phrases in a fresh sense, they take common words and put them to nobler uses and transfigure them with holier meaning. The Reformation, which changed men's beliefs and ideals throughout half Europe, also altered their religious language, and to this day a Protestant finds it hard to understand the devotional dialect of an earnest Roman Catholic. The quaint speech of the Society of Friends originated in a corresponding peculiarity in the attitude and outlook of the Quaker spirit. The great Methodist revival in the eighteenth century left many deep marks upon England, but not the least of its results was to change and colour the evangelical vocabulary. And in our own day the Salvation Army startled serious people by daring to invent a phraseology of its own. In this respect it followed the universal law which makes all religious communities, from Jesuits to Plymouth Brethren, develop their characteristic shibboleths, so that as we listen we hear them speaking of the *magnalia Dei*, every man in his own tongue.

A similar process must have taken place, on a great scale, in the beginning of the Gospel. Men could not use old bottles to hold the new wine of the Kingdom of God. As soon as Christian faith spread abroad and rooted itself in heathen soil, its genius borrowed and adapted the

language of its new home. The early Gentile converts did what the converts in our modern mission fields are constantly doing. They converted secular words to Christian uses. They baptized and consecrated common forms of speech to a divine significance. They invented a fresh vocabulary in which to embody their new faith. Such a process could not be other than gradual and difficult. But as we look back across the centuries at those little brotherhoods of believers, scattered along the shores of the Midland Sea, we discover, even in the pages of the New Testament, traces of a definite Christian dialect forming itself in the childhood of the Christian Church. This may be illustrated by two examples of the use of words not in a technical sense theological. In the Acts of the Apostles we find that the earliest Christians used often to speak of their faith simply as "the Way." Our Lord had set them an example when He said, "Narrow is the Way." He Himself was a new and living Way. And so we read of the Way of God, the Way of truth, the Way of salvation, until this term became a kind of synonym for Christianity. Saul the Pharisee's commission from the High Priest ran that if he found "any of the Way" he should bring them bound to Jerusalem, and in after years he confessed, "I

persecuted this Way unto the death." Just as early Methodists talked about "the Society," and modern Salvationists talk about "the Army," and old-fashioned Nonconformists spoke of "the Cause," so these first disciples spoke of "the Way."

Yet another and more striking example of primitive Christian dialect appears in the habit which the early Christian disciples acquired of referring to "the Name" as though that word stood for Jesus Christ Himself. The New Testament commonly designates our Lord either as Jesus, the Saviour, or as Christ, the Sent of God. After the Resurrection these were often combined and merged into one appellation. Outside Palestine foreigners would hardly distinguish between the two. In the common language of Christians, the Object of their faith was spoken of as Jesus Christ. But again and again we read how they preached concerning the Name. They are forbidden to speak to any man in this Name. Yet speak they must, for there is none other Name given under heaven among men whereby we can be saved. Many believed on His Name, and were baptized in His Name, and had life through His Name. They gathered together for worship in His Name, and therefore with His Presence

among them. When they offered a prayer, or gave a cup of cold water, or received a little child, it was in the Lord's Name. Whatsoever they did, in word or deed, they did all in the Name of the Lord Jesus. To name that Name was to depart from iniquity.

This characteristic formula of the early Church was more than an accident. Some, indeed, would ascribe it to the influence of ancient magic, which held that a god or demon was present whenever his name was duly uttered in an invocation. But no student of Scripture can fail to recognize in this primitive Christian usage the imitation of a far earlier Jewish habit of speech. In the Old Testament the Name of the Lord is mentioned almost as often as the Lord Himself. For an overpowering reverence had gathered round the sacred Hebrew name for Almighty God. The Jews came to treat it as a mystery, too awful to be spoken aloud. It was so high above every name that the rabbis shrank from pronouncing its syllables. They believed that its sound carried supernatural potency. They substituted a feebler word in its stead. In ordinary Jewish speech "the Name" came to be used as an equivalent for Jehovah. Just as modern Englishmen will often refer vaguely to "Providence" when they dislike saying "God," so the Jews in the age of the

Advent habitually spoke of "the Name": they worshipped the Name of the Lord. And thus it was not by accident that the Christian apostles fell into the custom of treating the Name of Jesus Christ in the same sort of fashion as their fathers had treated the ineffable, unutterable Name of Jehovah. As Reuchlin insists in his treatise, "De Verbo Mirifico," such a usage has profound significance. It bears witness to the way in which those early disciples instinctively thought about Jesus Christ and felt towards Jesus Christ. They betray their faith in Him artlessly, unconsciously, by the very terms in which they refer to Him. For them, His Name is above every name, because they beheld heaven opened and Jesus in the midst of the throne of God.

Not many years after the resurrection, the Lord's Name was passed on to His disciples. "Galileans" had been their Jewish title of contempt. They had spoken of themselves as "the brethren," "the faithful," "those of the Way." But they were called Christians first at Antioch. The quick-witted mob of that profligate Syrian city invented as a nickname what was welcomed and worn as the proudest of all titles. Two centuries later Tertullian tells his heathen opponents: "When you call

us Christians, you bear witness to the Name of our Master." One apostle writes of those "who blaspheme the Holy Name by which ye are called," and another apostle adds, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed." For the Lord's words came true: "Ye shall be brought before rulers, ye shall be hated of all men, for My Name's sake." Such was the calling and election of the first missionaries who hazarded their lives for the Name of Jesus, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name. Here lay the very test of their fidelity. Twice over the Christ of the Apocalypse blesses those faithful among the faithless found: "Thou holdest fast My Name . . . thou hast not denied My Name." Thus the first Christians lived and laboured and endured and triumphed in the Holy Name. How naturally they came to love its syllables, how innocently they hallowed its very sound! For them that Name was "Prayer Book and Articles and Creed and Canons all in one." There is a fanciful legend told concerning Ignatius which serves, nevertheless, as a parable and picture of reality. After his martyrdom, we read, his heart was cut in pieces, and the Name of Jesus was found imprinted in golden letters on every fragment. Such a legend glows

and flames with the Church's devotion to the One Author and Finisher of faith. To the worshippers of Jesus Christ His Name is far above every name that is named in this world or in that which is to come. Because His Life is above every life, and His Love above every love, and His Passion above every passion. Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto His Sorrow. His Sacrifice is above every sacrifice, His Victory above every victory. Therefore at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are various schools and types of Christianity—philosophic, dogmatic, sacramental. But one type at least began with the Church's beginning, and in spite of superstitions and illusions it remains the life of millions of childlike souls. It is a Christianity which is often uninstructed in doctrine, unversed in reasoning, careless about ritual, but it concentrates itself upon what may be called the idea of Jesus Christ. It is summed up in a vivid conception of His Person, an ardent devotion to Himself. We might suppose, as Mr. Shorthouse has said, that such an idea would grow faint and shadowy, that such an image would fade and melt away amid the rest of

time's dreams. But as a matter of practical experience

> That One Face, far from vanish, rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose.

All generations of believers have proved its strange, unearthly attraction, its enduring permanence, its mighty and miraculous power. For such disciples as these, their faith is expressed in the Name of Jesus Christ, their love is centred upon the Person of Jesus Christ. In every age there are multitudes of simple-hearted folk, the aged and the little children, the humble and the heavy-laden and the poor, to whom science is dumb and nature is dark and criticism is foolishness, who find in Jesus Christ Himself all and more than all they need. Not in empty words do such Christians testify to the sufficiency of their Saviour and the supremacy of His Name. They tell us that He is far better even than His own promises. They declare that they know Him as they cannot know their dearest earthly friends. In Him all the longings of the soul find their fruition, all losses have their compensation, all the ills and griefs of life have their antidote and their cure. Alas, that no man has skill to explain to his fellows how much the Name of Jesus means. Each soul must be taught

the secret from above. We cannot impart the beatific vision; we cannot even share with each other the glimpse of it which nevertheless we know, humbly and thankfully, that we ourselves enjoy. Yet the vision is brought near to darkened hearts by the feeblest preacher, as often as he names aright that Name which is above every name—which was once an incarnate reality, which is still the Way and the Truth and the Life of God.

"AND NOW, O LORD GOD, IF IN THIS WORK I HAVE SAID ANYTHING WHICH IS THINE, THINE OWN WILL RECOGNISE IT; AND IF I HAVE SAID ANYTHING WHICH IS MINE, DO THOU AND THINE FORGIVE IT."

St. Athanasius.

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